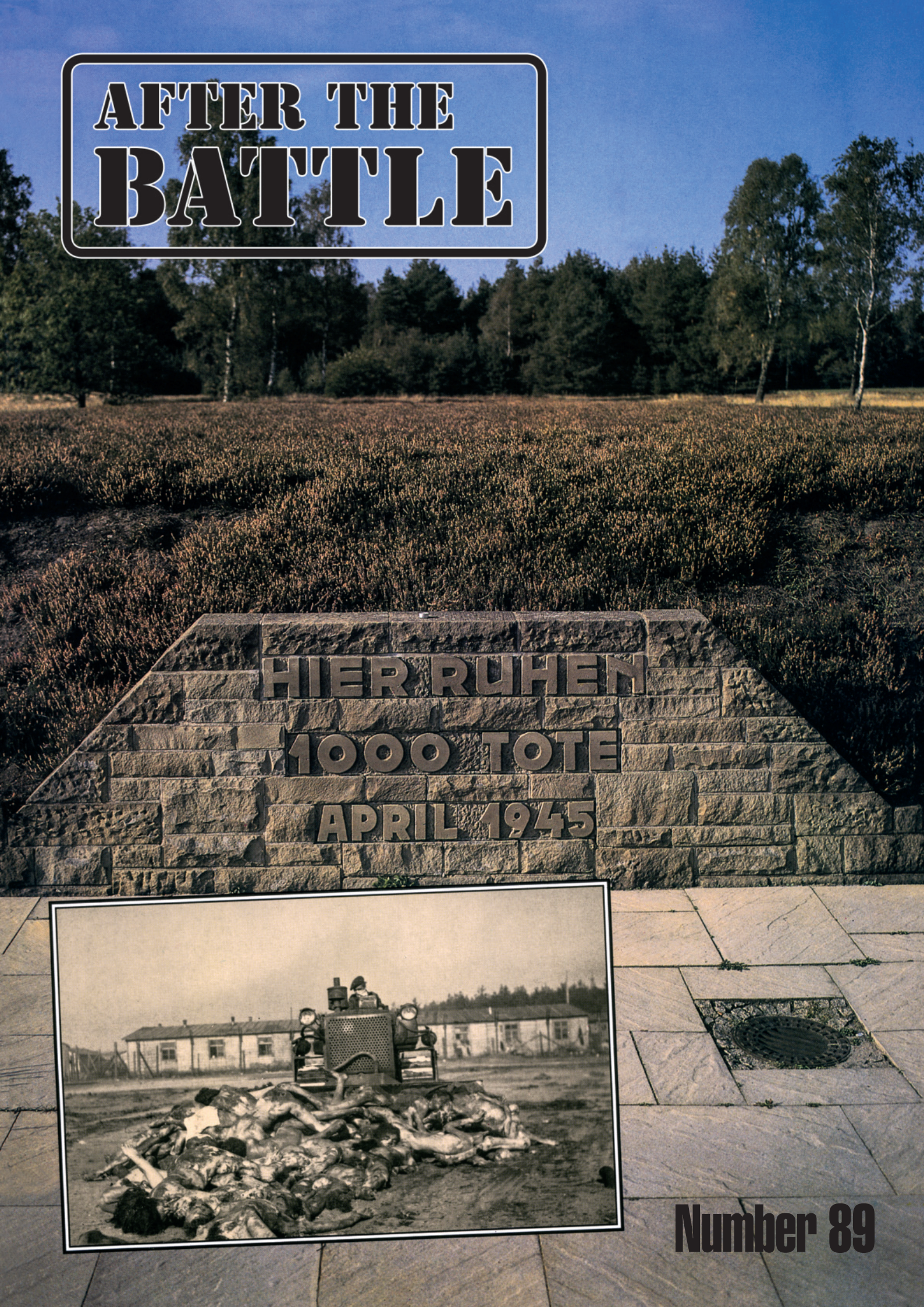
AFTER THE BATTLE



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Front Cover: The full horrors of the Nazi concentration camps were revealed in April 1945 with the liberation of Belsen. This shot by Sergeant Harry Oakes of Sapper Frank Chapman on his Caterpillar D6 shocked the world. These particular corpses were buried in Grave No. 1 — seen today in its neat memorialised state. (Karel Margry/IWM)

Centre Page: The *Lady Be Good*, a B-24 Liberator of the 376th Bomb Group of the US Ninth Air Force went missing in the Sahara in 1943. Its wreckage was discovered 15 years later; now it has been recovered for eventual display at Tobruk. (Dr Fadel Ali Mohamed)

Back Cover: Recovered from their unmarked graves on Merapas Island, two members of the ill-fated November 1944 Operation 'Rimau' were finally laid to rest in Kranji War Cemetery in August 1994. (Royal Navy)

Photo credits: GBB – Gedenkstätte Bergen-Belsen; IWM – Imperial War Museum, London; RIOD – Rijksinstituut voor Oologsdocumentatie, Amsterdam.

THIS IS THE SITE OF
THE INFAMOUS BELSEN CONCENTRATION CAMP
Liberated by the British on 15 April 1945.
10,000 UNBURIED DEAD WERE FOUND HERE.
ANOTHER 13,000 HAVE SINCE DIED.
ALL OF THEM VICTIMS OF THE
GERMAN NEW ORDER IN EUROPE.
AND AN EXAMPLE OF NAZI KULTUR.

Fifty years ago, on April 15, 1945, British forces liberated Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. The horrible scenes found there, captured on film by British Army photographers and cameramen, shocked the world and, for the first time, brought home the true barbarity of the Nazi regime. Soon, the name Belsen became a symbol for Nazi terror and genocide, the camp itself being seen as the prime example of a Nazi concentration camp. Shortly after liberation, this sign, and a similar one in German, was put up by the British Army on either side of the connecting gate between the SS administrative compound and the concentration camp proper. Through the gate ran the Lagerstrasse, the main camp road. Today, this part of the camp lies outside the grounds of the Belsen Memorial. (IWM)

Fifty years ago, the Allied armies advancing to the heart of Germany discovered the true character of the Third Reich when they first came across the concentration camps. On April 11, 1945, Buchenwald was liberated by the Americans and four days later, the British reached Bergen-Belsen. Dachau was freed by the Americans on the 29th, and Mauthausen on May 5. Many other, smaller camps were discovered as well.

Films and photographs of the gruesome, horrifying scenes found in the camps, taken by British and American Army cameramen, were quickly made public and a shudder of horror went round the globe. Although the outside world had long known about concentration camps in Germany, the first newspaper reports about them appearing as far back as 1935, and although Allied governments had known about the mass murder of the European Jews since December 1942, having received reliable and confirmed reports about the gas chambers at Auschwitz, for some reason this knowledge had not really sunk in and the general public had only the vaguest notion of the true character of the camps or the conditions that existed in them. Thus, the shock and horror came only when the first visual images reached the general public.

Buchenwald and Belsen were not the first camps to be liberated. Maidanek in Poland had been captured by the Red Army as far back as July 24, 1944, and Auschwitz on January 27, 1945. However, the Germans had evacuated these locations — as they would do with numerous other camps later — before the approaching enemy armies, driving the surviving inmates all across Germany in the murderous death marches, and had systematically tried to remove or destroy as much as possible of the physical evidence of the genocide and atrocities committed in them. (At Auschwitz, the Soviets found only 5,000 survivors, and the gas chambers blown). Thus, reports of these camps did not have the impact in the West which the camps liberated in April 1945 had.

The original camp entrance is now just a wooded track leading off the main road from Bergen to Winsen. The sign boards stood some 200 metres up this track.

BERGEN-BELSEN

By Karel Margry

Of all the camps uncovered in 1945, Bergen-Belsen was perhaps the most notorious. The ghastly scenes pictured and filmed there, and the much-publicised trial later in 1945, which was the first to deal with war crimes committed in concentration camps, combined to make Belsen the symbol for all concentration camps. Many, certainly in Great Britain, regard it to this day as typical of the Nazi system of extermination.

The paradox of it all, however, is that Belsen was not at all a prototype, or even a typical example of a Nazi concentration camp. Belsen was established relatively late: in 1943; there were no gas chambers there and its fence wire was not electrified. It was not a killing centre, like Sobibor, Treblinka and Belzec, which existed for the sole purpose of gassing Jews (and which the SS had already dissolved and obliterated all traces of long before the Red Army reached them); it was not a work camp for political prisoners, like Dachau, Buchenwald, Sachsenhausen, Flossenbürg, Mauthausen, Groß-Rosen, Natzweiler, Ravensbrück, Oranienburg or their innumerable satellite camps; nor a combination of these, like Maidanek or the huge Auschwitz-Birkenau complex. Belsen's status in the Nazi camp system was an exceptional one. However, its development, in two years, from a special camp created in 1943 to the horror camp of 1945, reveals essential elements of the Nazis' extermination policy and camp system and the mentality of its bureaucrat officials and administrators, governed as they were by cold expediency, ruthless economic calculation and complete callousness towards the sufferings of their victims.

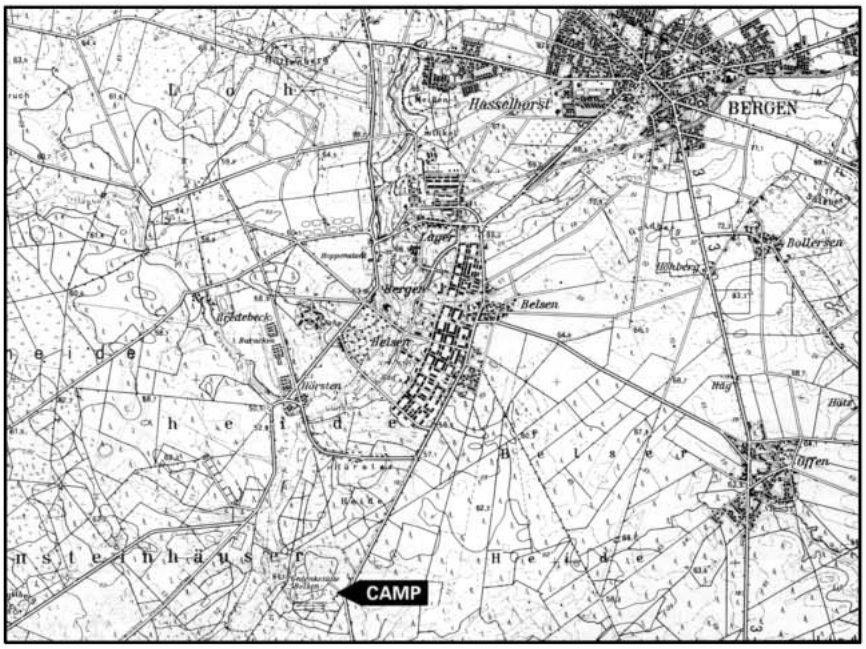
For us to view the situation as it appeared to both the British and American public, and Allied servicemen advancing across Europe, in 1945, we must try to expunge from our minds the knowledge we now have of concentration camps. The tyranny of Nazism extended to the subjugation of nations and the brutal treatment of their population: that much was known, but the fact that the Jews of Europe were being systematically exterminated, although known in Allied government circles, had not sunk in with the general public at all. Only when Belsen and the other camps were actually liberated did the truth become known. As far as the German population was concerned, although the majority would in later years claim to have had no knowledge of the extermination camps, undoubtedly many did have more than an inkling as to what was going on. *Top:* **One of a series of pictures taken by Sidney Barlow who served with the 8th Lines of Communication unit of No. 10 Garrison. This one shows Grave No. 8.** *Right:* **The landscaped grave midst its forest setting belies the horrors which shocked the world in 1945.**

Before it became a concentration camp of the SS, Belsen had been a Wehrmacht prisoner-of-war camp for Soviet PoWs. Brought here in thousands after July 1941, and forced to live in holes in the ground, some 18,000 died from hunger, exposure and epidemics in the first winter alone. In all, an estimated 30,000 to 50,000 Soviet soldiers perished at Belsen, being buried in mass graves. *Left:* **The Russian cemetery lies just to the north of the Belsen memorial site.** *Right:* **The Russian monument was erected in the cemetery in June 1946. For a long time, the Soviet PoW side of the camp's history was completely neglected, and access to the cemetery was difficult because it lay within a NATO training area. Only in 1985 did the Land Parliament of Lower Saxony order that their history be incorporated in the memorial's exhibition, and that a path be laid from the memorial to the cemetery.**

BERGEN-BELSEN CAMP 1943-45

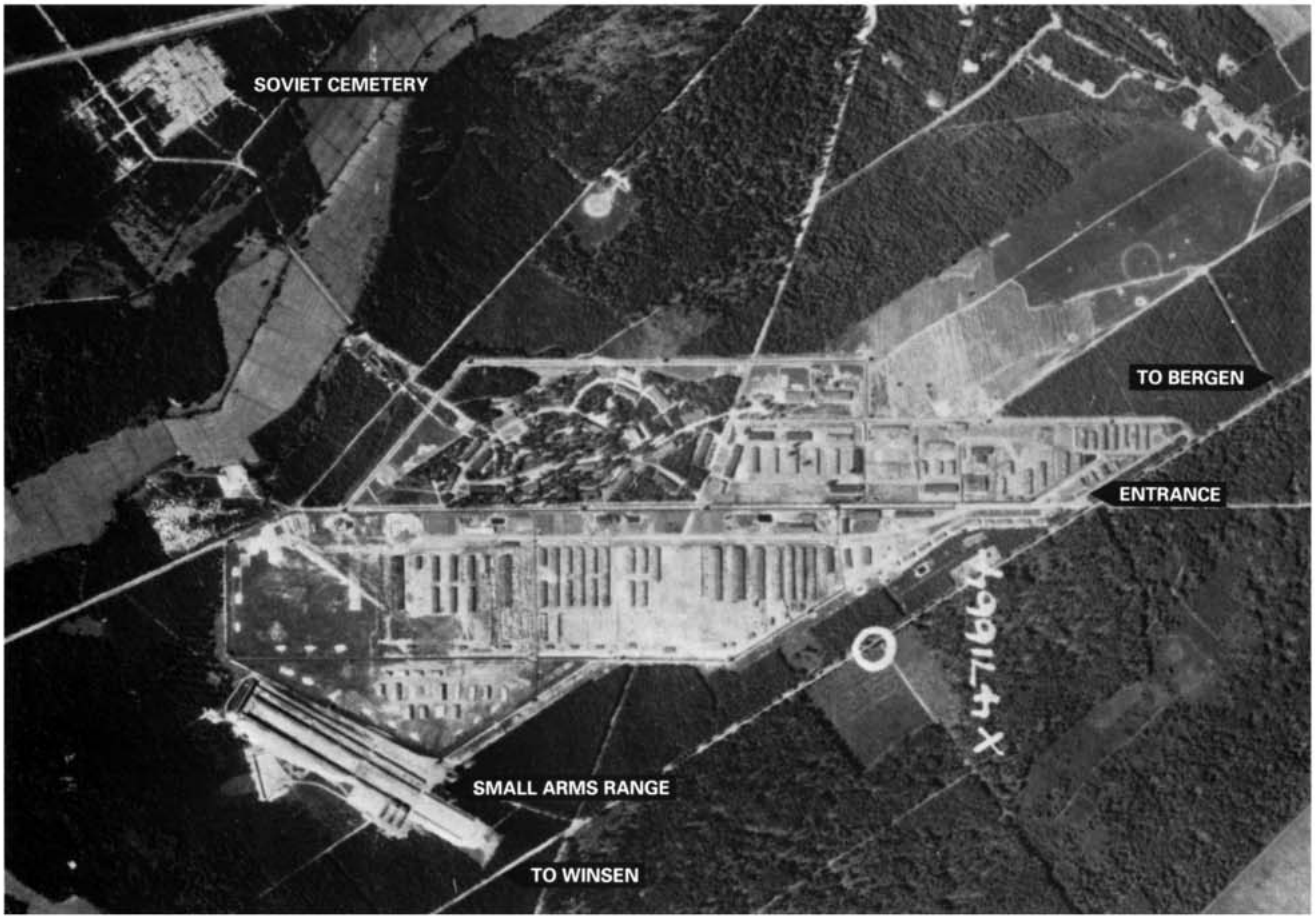
In March 1943, Reichsführer-SS Heinrich Himmler adopted a plan formulated by the German Foreign Ministry to exchange Jews under his control against German civilians interned abroad. These Jews would not be sent to the death camps in the East but collected in a special camp. The SS initially called it a *Zivil-Internierungs-Lager* (Civilian Internment Camp), but when they found out that such-named camps were eligible to Red Cross inspections, they quickly changed the name to *Aufenthalts-Lager* (Residential or Detention Camp). Eligible for this camp were Jews with American or British passports; Jews holding passports or so-called 'promesas' (passport certificates) from neutral countries (mainly Spain, Portugal, Turkey, or Latin American countries like Paraguay and Argentina); Jews possessing so-called Palestine Certificates (permits to emigrate to the British mandate); Jews with influential connections abroad; Jews who could be used as hostage or as instruments of political or economic pressure; and Jewish top functionaries.

Looking for a site for the new camp, in April 1943 the SS-Wirtschaftsverwaltungshauptamt (SS Main Department of Economic Administration) — the authority administering the concentration camps — procured permission to take over part of a Wehrmacht prisoner-of-war camp just south of the panzer training school barracks at Bergen near Hannover in Lower Saxony. Here, in 1936, a number of wooden huts had been erected to accommodate the workers building the new military barracks. In 1940, the Wehrmacht had used these buildings to house 600 French and Belgian PoWs. Then, in early 1941, the site had been selected to become a camp for Soviet PoWs — Stalag XI C (113) — and from July 1941, some 20,000 Soviet prisoners had filled the camp to overflowing. They had been kept in the open under extremely harsh conditions, the huts being used as camp hospital. Ravaged by dysentery, typhus and tuberculosis, by the time part of the camp was handed over to the SS in April 1943, some 18,000 of the Soviet PoWs had perished there. Stalag XI C was dissolved, but the PoW hospital area was kept on, becoming an ancillary for Stalag XI B at Fallingbostel.



Left: **Stalag XI C was sited at Bergen, almost midway between Hamburg and Hannover in northern Germany.** *Right:* **The PoW camp lay south of the little village of Belsen, hidden in the woods along the Bergen-Winsen road, and it was taken over by the SS-Wirtschaftsverwaltungshauptamt (the SS Main Department for Economic Administration) in April 1943.**

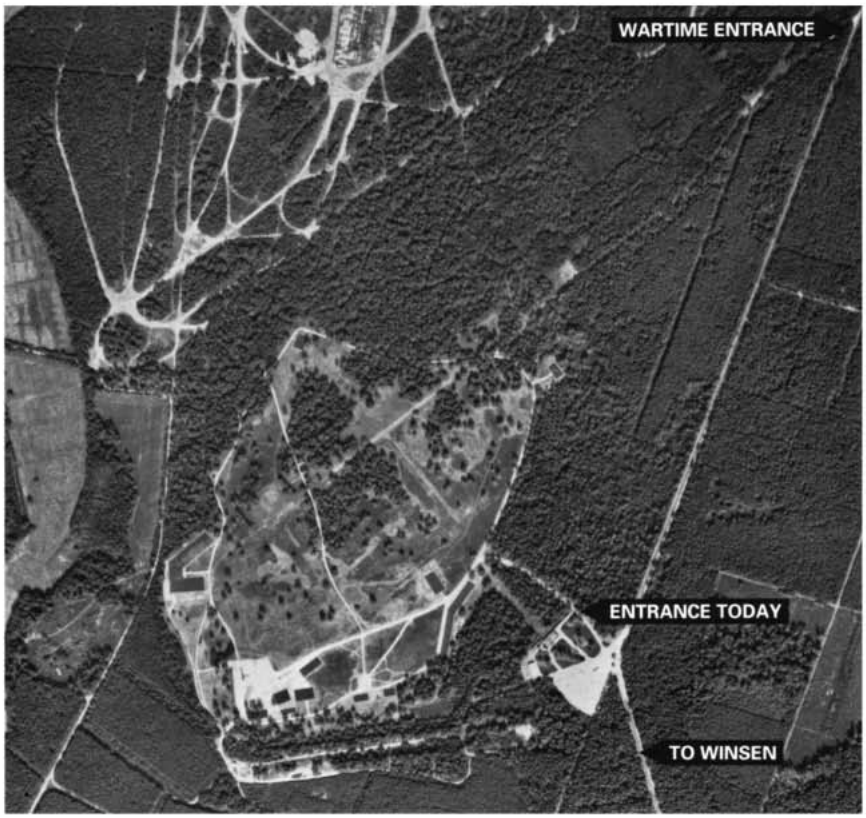
Although often regarded as the prototype of a Nazi concentration camp, Belsen was in fact an exception within the concentration camp system. It was set up as a special camp for so-called 'Exchange Jews', i.e. Jews who could be swapped for German nationals interned abroad, and also for Jews whose papers entitled them to be 'returned' to a neutral country.



Before the camp (of which SS-Hauptsturmführer Adolf Haas had been appointed commander) was ready for its new function, some 500 prisoners from Buchenwald, Niederhagen and Natzweiler — mainly Russians and Poles — were sent to Belsen as Bau-Kommando (Building Squad) to enlarge the camp and improve its sanitary installations. They also built a small crematorium. Then, the camp slowly filled with the 'privileged' Jews. In July, the first of 2,500 'exchange Jews', most of them holding Latin American papers, arrived from Poland. In August, 441 Greek Jews, from the island of Saloniki but holding Spanish passports, arrived. However, after trains from the Westerbork transit camp in Holland had brought in the first of nine consignments of Dutch 'exchange Jews' in September, about 2,000 of the Polish Jews were deceivedly sent to Auschwitz in October 1943 and May 1944 to be gassed. In all, some 3,670 Dutch Jews were sent to Belsen. In 1944, smaller groups of 'exchange Jews' arrived from Greece (155 Spanish and 19 Portuguese Jews), Italy (200 North African Jews with British passports), France (200 Jewish wives of French PoWs), Yugoslavia, Poland, Albania and Germany, and also, in July, a large group of 1,683 Hungarian Jews.

Daily life in the 'Detention Camp' was harsh, but tolerable. The average daily ration consisted of coffee in the morning, 1.5 litres of soup at noon and, if available, 200-300 grammes of bread in the afternoon. Sometimes there would be a little jam or butter, or a small slice of sausage or cheese. A roll call was held every day at 3 p.m. which could last from one to five hours. In spite of a lapse of social and moral values — marked by petty quarrels, egoism, theft — many tried to uphold some sort of standard by engaging in cultural, educational and religious activities. Meanwhile, everyone lived in the hope that they might be released abroad and regain freedom.

The camp consisted of an SS administrative area nearest the road and beyond that a wired-in perimeter, some 1,500 yards long by 750 yards wide, which was divided into several sections for different categories of inmates. When this aerial shot was taken by an RAF reconnaissance aircraft on September 13, 1944, there existed the Prisoners' Camp, the Neutrals' Camp, the Special Camp, the Hungarians' Camp, the Star Camp, and the Tent Camp. (Crown Copyright) *Below:* **The Belsen Memorial today occupies less than half of the original camp grounds. (Landesvermessung Hannover)**



Only six group transfers ever left Belsen for the free world, and of these, only two were an exchange of the kind originally envisaged. In February 1944, the 441 Greek Jews of Spanish nationality were sent to Spain — not in exchange, but as a 'return' of citizens to a neutral country. In June, 222 Jews from Belsen were sent by train to Istanbul where they were actually exchanged for interned Germans from Jerusalem, after which they reached Palestine. In August and December 1944, the 1,683 Hungarian Jews were sent to Switzerland and freedom, not in exchange for Germans but as part of a secret deal between the SS and Jewish rescue organisations to trade people for money and goods (Himmler's main aim being to create an opening for secret negotiations with the Western Allies). Then, in January 1945, 136 American Jews were released to Switzerland in an actual American-German exchange operation. Finally, as late as March 1945, 105 Turkish Jews left for Sweden in another 'return of neutrals' operation.

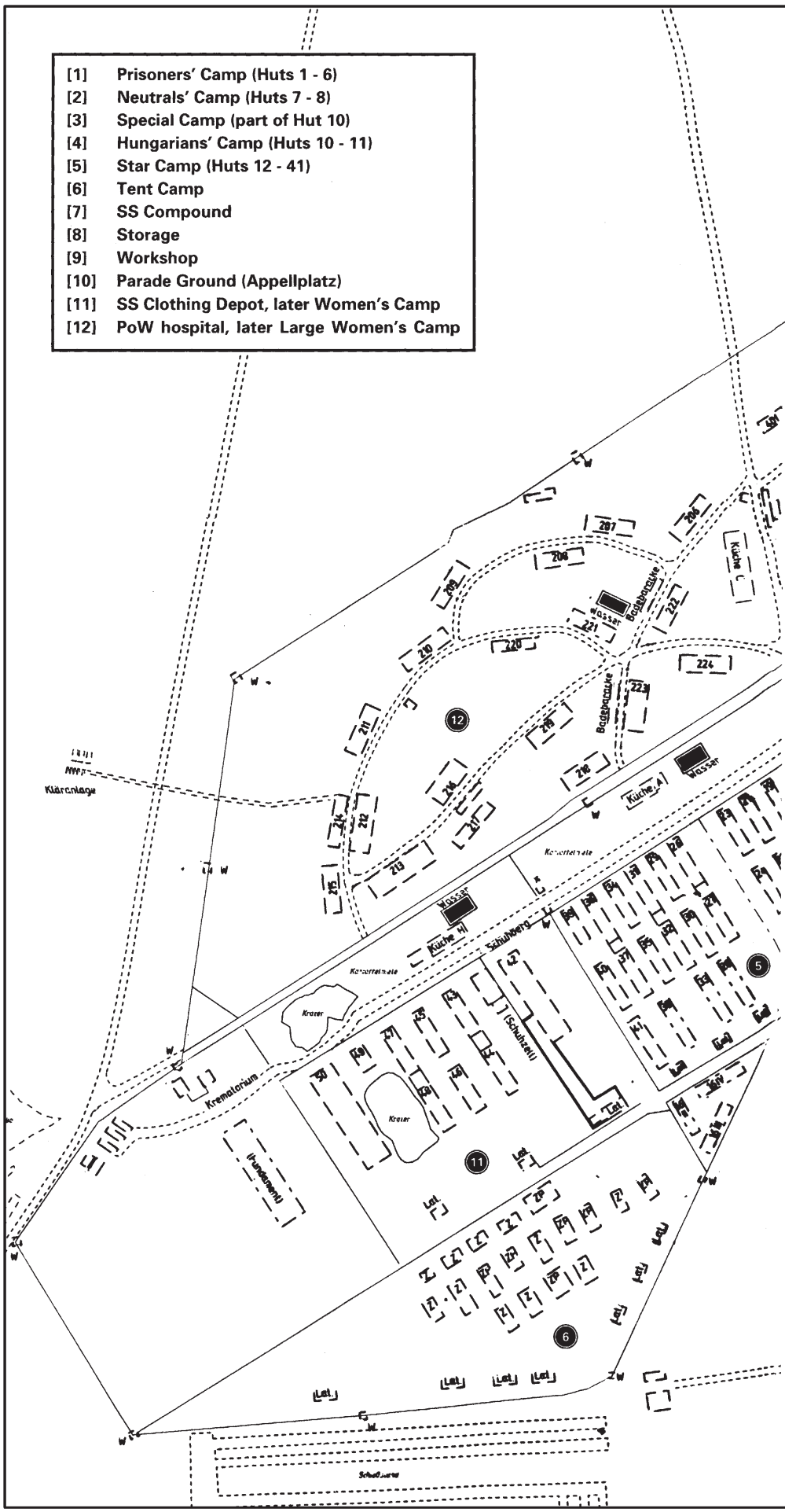
However, by then, Belsen had assumed an entirely different character. In the spring of 1944, a new development had occurred which would gradually diffuse Belsen's status of a special camp for Jews and slowly transform it to a normal concentration camp for Jewish and non-Jewish prisoners. Starting in March 1944, the SS-Wirtschaftsverwaltungshauptamt had begun to send to Belsen prisoners from other concentration camps who were so ill or exhausted that they could no longer work in the war industry. Since, to the WVHA bureaucrats, Belsen was an 'unproductive' camp, where inmates were not forced to work, they thought it a good idea to send as well others there who had outlived their 'economic usefulness'. So Belsen became a dumping ground for ill, sick, starved and emaciated slave workers. The first such group arrived on March 27, 1944: 1,000 men from the underground V-weapons factory at Nordhausen. More from other work camps followed.

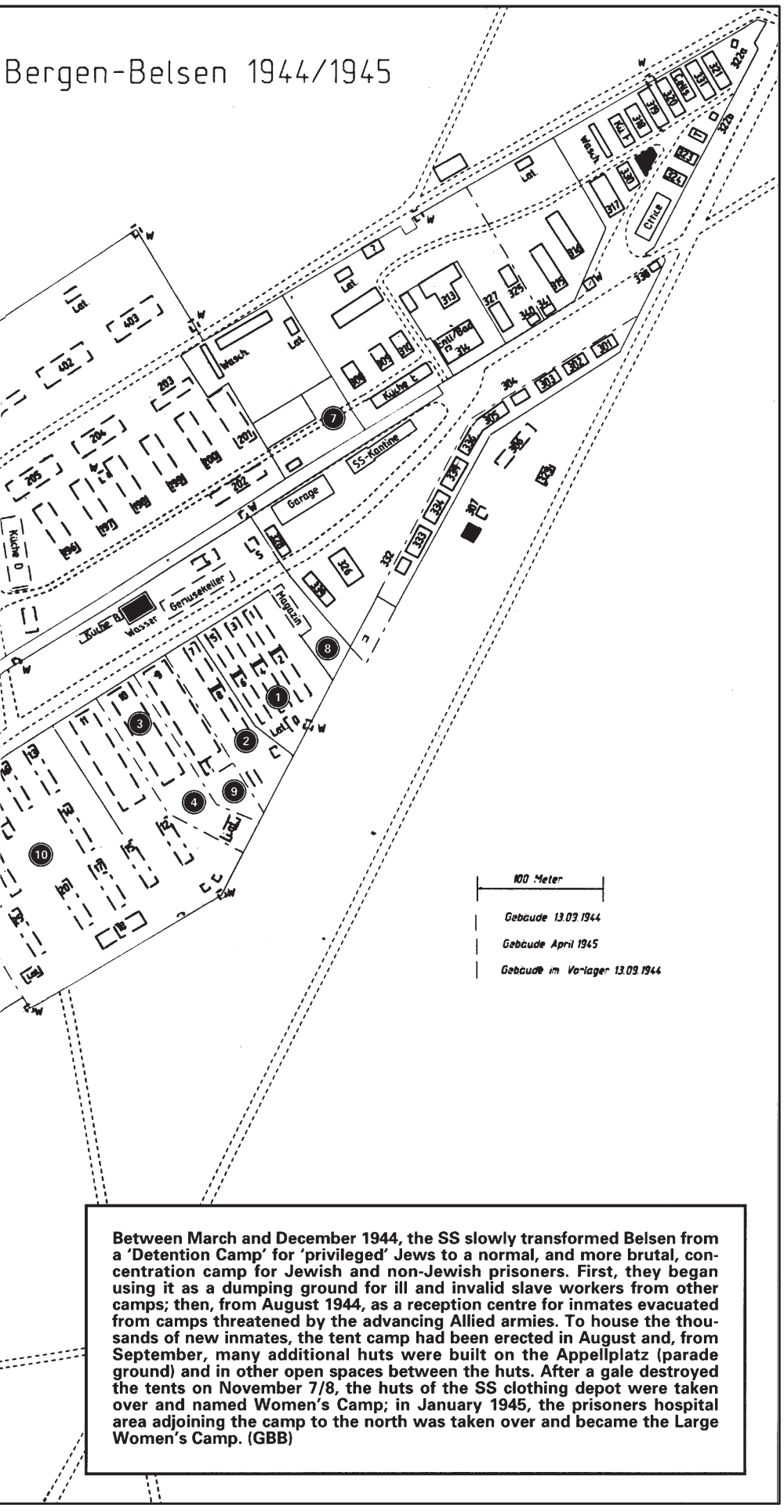
To mark the transformation, Belsen's status was officially changed from 'Detention Camp' to 'Recuperation Camp' (*Erholungs-Lager*). However, few if any of those sent there ever recovered from their illness or exhaustion, for out of the same 'economic' reasoning, the SS thought it unnecessary to provide the camp with sufficient food or extra medical care: of some 4,000 persons sent there in 1944, some 1,700 had died before the year was out.

A second transformation occurred when the Nazis began evacuating concentration camps threatened by the advancing Allied armies, moving the inmates more to the interior of the Reich. The initial groups sent to Belsen consisted mostly of women. The first, comprising some 4,000 Polish women and children captured in the Warsaw uprising, arrived in August. They were followed by some 8,000 women from Auschwitz between August and early November. The women were accommodated in big tents hastily erected by the Bau-Kommando in the open space beyond the huts.

Since different categories of prisoners were sent to the 'detention', later 'recuperation' camp, the SS divided it into several sections which were treated differently and strictly isolated from one another by high wire fences so that the various groups could not contact each other. By September 1944, Belsen comprised the following sections:

The Häftlings-Lager (Prisoners' Camp) [1]. This section at first housed the 500 men of the original Bau-Kommando in four huts. Dissolved in February 1944, it was then used for the sick and disabled — all males — brought here from other camps, expanding first to eight huts and later taking over huts from other enclosures. From the beginning, this section was administered as a regular concentration camp, inmates wearing striped





Between March and December 1944, the SS slowly transformed Belsen from a 'Detention Camp' for 'privileged' Jews to a normal, and more brutal, concentration camp for Jewish and non-Jewish prisoners. First, they began using it as a dumping ground for ill and invalid slave workers from other camps; then, from August 1944, as a reception centre for inmates evacuated from camps threatened by the advancing Allied armies. To house the thousands of new inmates, the tent camp had been erected in August and, from September, many additional huts were built on the Appellplatz (parade ground) and in other open spaces between the huts. After a gale destroyed the tents on November 7/8, the huts of the SS clothing depot were taken over and named Women's Camp; in January 1945, the prisoners hospital area adjoining the camp to the north was taken over and became the Large Women's Camp. (GBB)

camp clothes, performing hard labour to the point of exhaustion, being ruled by 'Kapos' (fellow inmates with authority over prisoners and acting as part of the camp staff) and suffering cruel mistreatment by SS and Kapos alike. After each roll call, numerous corpses would remain on the parade ground. With inadequate medical care, the mortality rate was appalling. One Kapo, Karl Rothe, murdered some 200 inmates with phenol injections. (His fellow inmates later killed him.)

The Neutralen-Lager (Neutrals' Camp) [2] of two huts contained the several hundred Jews who were citizens of neutral states, notably Spaniards, Portuguese, Argentineans and Turks. Conditions here were relatively tolerable (until March 1945), the inmates not being forced to work and the food being reasonably plenty. A 'Jewish Council' led by a 'Jewish Elder' administered internal affairs of the section.

The Sonder-Lager (Special Camp) [3], a sub-section of the Neutrals' Camp, housed the 350 Polish Jews with Latin American passports or Palestine Certificates who remained after the Auschwitz transfers. They were kept separate because they could inform the other inmates of the Nazi atrocities going on in the East.

The Ungarn-Lager (Hungarians' Camp) [4], consisting of two large huts, was opened in July 1944 to house the 1,683 Hungarian Jews about whose exchange for money and goods Himmler had ordered negotiations with Jewish organisations abroad. These inmates were allowed to wear their own clothes, albeit with the Star of David; did not have to endure the endless roll calls and were not forced to work. Like the neutrals, they had Jewish self-administration.

The Stern-Lager (Star Camp) [5] was numerically the largest and most important camp section until the autumn of 1944. In some 18 large wooden huts, it accommodated some 4,400 'exchange Jews', of which the 3,670 Dutch Jews were the largest and most-influential group. The inmates wore civilian clothes, the name Star Camp deriving from the Star of David which they had to wear on them. Here too, a Jewish Elder and Council carried out the administration. Men and women lived separately, but families were allowed to get together during the day. Inmates could write censored letters abroad. All inmates, even the old and weak, were forced to work, most of them in the so-called Schuh-Kommando (Shoe Squad), taking apart leather shoes for recycling in the German war industry. This was done in a large stable block inside the camp. Food in the Star Camp was insufficient and of bad quality. Two of the huts were used as sick bays.

The Zelt-Lager (Tent Camp) or Frauen-Lager (Women's Camp) [6], comprising some 12 big tents erected in the open area beyond the Star Camp in early August 1944, housed the numerous groups of women arriving from Warsaw and, later, Auschwitz in August-November. On the night of November 7/8, a gale completely destroyed the tents after which the women were moved into huts of the adjoining Star Camp (where new ones were being built on the central square) and into others between the Star Camp and the crematorium which, until then, had been a Waffen-SS clothes depot. This now took over the designation Women's Camp.

Many of these women did not stay long in Belsen being sent on to work assignments elsewhere. In fact, Belsen now became a sort of transit camp for female slave labourers, sending out work squads to numerous camps and factories in northern Germany, mostly outposts of Buchenwald and Flossenbürg. Meanwhile, food and water supplies began to falter; the first cases of spotted fever occurred.

A view of the camp from the watchtower nearest the perimeter gate. On the right is the compound of the Large Women's Camp while the enclosures of the original camp area on the left, with the now-much-larger Prisoners' Camp nearest to the camera. The chimnied building in the foreground is the camp's Gemüsekeller (vegetable cellar); in the centre is one of the camp's five cookhouses (Kitchen B on the plan on pages 4-5); and, in between, one of the four open water basins in the camp. (IWM)

On December 2, the conversion to a normal concentration camp was completed when SS-Hauptsturmführer Josef Kramer, previously commander of Auschwitz-Birkenau, relieved Adolf Haas as camp commander. On this date, the number of inmates totalled 15,257. Kramer first measure was to abolish the Jewish self-administration of the Star Camp and introduce Kapo rule there as well. He also introduced collective punishments.

From January onwards, countless numbers of inmates evacuated from other camps — exhausted from long marches or train journeys in open carriages through icy winter — reached the camp. To find space for them, Kramer secured permission to take over the Stalag hospital area — which adjoined the camp to the north but until then had always been separated from it — and used it to accommodate women. This enclosure of about 35 huts became known as the Großes Frauenlager (Large Women's Camp) and by January 15, women formed Belsen's major contingent: 16,475 against 5,811 men.

Today the Lagerstrasse is just a track through the woods which have grown up on the former camp site since the war.

The same cistern as seen from the ground, with the vegetable depot behind. As far as known, no photographs exist of Belsen before liberation, all pictures having been taken by British Army cameramen immediately after. This one, taken by Lieutenant Wilson, graphically illustrates a scene witnessed by Lieutenant-Colonel Dick Taylor on the day of liberation, April 15: 'There was a concrete pit near the first cookhouse we visited, with a few inches of dirty water in the bottom — this was the only water supply that was seen, and crowds were round it trying to fill tins and jars tied to the end of long sticks.' (IWM)

New arrivals continued to pour into Belsen which was completely unable to cope. Now, the development that was to lead to chaos and, eventually, inferno, began: unbearable overcrowding, starvation, raging epidemics, resulting in appalling death rates. On February 1, the number of inmates was 22,000; that month some 7,000 people died; in March, the corresponding figures were 41,520 and 18,168.

Starvation and epidemics were the chief causes for the mass deaths at Belsen, infection spreading quickly and disastrously because Kramer and the WVHA administration failed to provide sanitary facilities which could have kept the camp clean and hygienic. When the water supply failed, because the power works supplying electricity for the area pumping station had been bombed, the nearby military barracks were supplied by water trucks, but the camp was not. There were vast stocks of medicine and instruments stored in the Large Women's Camp which were never issued by Kramer and only discovered by prisoner doctors just before liberation.

Belsen was at its worst about three weeks before liberation. Typhus was raging and about 1,000 people succumbed to it daily but the small crematorium could not cope with the disposal of all the corpses, even though it burned day and night. There was no running water and rations were down to half a pint of soup a day and bread three times a week.

In April, the last remaining 'exchange Jews', some 7,000 in number, left Belsen for Theresienstadt in three separate groups but their departure hardly alleviated the space shortage. To cope with the unending flow of new arrivals, a part of the nearby Wehrmacht barracks was taken over, and it soon filled with some 15,000 prisoners arriving from Nordhausen. In the first two weeks of April, some 9,000 inmates died and thousands of corpses lay strewn all over the camp. On April 11, in a last attempt at cosmetic clean-up, Kramer ordered the dead to be thrown in huge pits that had been dug. For four days, April 11-14, the exhausted inmates were forced to drag corpses to these pits, whipped on by SS guards and Kapos and working for 12 hours without food or water. This way, an estimated 17,000 bodies were disposed of in open or scarcely covered pits.

On April 11, as part of his attempts to commence negotiations with the Western Allies, Himmler gave SS-Standartenführer Kurt Becher, his Special Commissioner for all Camps, a free hand to arrange an immediate hand-over of Lager Bergen-Belsen to the approaching Allied armies.

Although the entire camp was burned down and cleared away by the British after liberation, this same cistern survived through the years. This is how we found it, outside the memorial perimeter, overgrown and forgotten, in September 1992.

In 1991, the Belsen Memorial had started a project to uncover the few remains of the camp, the cistern being a prime target. Since cleared of growth and bushes, it now makes for a much better comparison.

SS-Hauptsturmführer Adolf Haas (in the long leather coat) was commander of Bergen-Belsen from April 1943 to December 1944. Before he came to Belsen, Haas had been in charge of the Niederhagen/Wewelsburg concentration camp near Paderborn from 1941 to 1943 when it was dissolved. Here he is pictured with the SS administrative staff and camp guards. (RIOD)

LIBERATION

On April 12, 1945, two German emissaries approached British Second Army lines along the River Aller under a white flag. They were Oberst Hanns Schmidt, deputy of Oberst Karl Harries, the commander of the Bergen military training ground, and Oberstleutnant Bohnekamp, deputy of Oberst Erhard Grosan, the local battle commander. Brought to the HQ of 159th Brigade (11th Armoured Division) at Buchholz, the German officers told of the existence of an internee camp at Bergen-Belsen. It contained some 45,000 internees and there were some 1,500 cases of typhoid, they said. Supplies of food and medicine were short. In the vicinity of the camp, which was not Wehrmacht but SS administered, there were in addition a large Wehrmacht barracks with 800 German and 1,500 Hungarian troops, a military hospital, and a PoW camp of 800 Russians. To avoid a spread of the typhus, the Germans said it was vital that there was no break-out from the camp and that the place be sealed off. They had come to propose that neither side carry the battle into the area involved. The two Germans were blindfolded and sent back to VIII Corps Headquarters at Schwarmstedt for negotiations. A further conference took place in the evening, the VIII Corps Chief-of-Staff, Brigadier Taylor-Balfour, and another officer crossing the German lines to negotiate with Oberst Grosan at Bergen and with the chief-of-staff of 1. Fallschirmjäger-Armee at Wolterdingen.

As a result, a local truce was arranged and an area of about six by eight kilometres around the camp was declared a 'neutral zone'. The Germans were to put up 'Danger — Typhus' signs on all roads leading to the camp, guarded by an unarmed sentry. The Wehrmacht barracks was to be handed over to the British. All Wehrmacht troops, both Hungarian and German, were to remain in position, and prevent any attempt of a mass break-out from the camp; they could retain their arms but were to wear a white arm band. The Hungarians were to be at the disposal of the British for any tasks given to them, while the Germans would be released within six days and sent back to their own lines. As for SS personnel (over which the emissaries said they did not have any authority), any SS camp guards found after noon of April 13 would be regarded as prisoners-of-war. The SS administrative personnel were to remain at their post, carry on with their job, and hand over all papers to the British when they arrived.

However, apart from the typhus warning, in none of the talks had the Wehrmacht officers given an indication that anything else was seriously amiss with the internee camp.

The following day, April 13, Lieutenant-Colonel Richard Taylor, CO of the 63rd Anti-Tank Regiment (VIII Corps Troops), was ordered by Corps to assume control of the truce area once it was reached by the 11th Armoured Division. Told to take one battery with him, he selected 249 (Oxfordshire Yeomanry) Battery (Major P. G. Barnett). He was also assigned a loudspeaker lorry of the 14th Amplifier Unit, commanded by Lieutenant Derrick Sington of the Intelligence Corps, for broadcasting announcements in the camp.

While Taylor knew the typhus situation in the camp was serious, he did not have any idea of its true condition or that of its inmates. Being a soldier, his thoughts were perhaps more on the military barracks and its garrison than on the camp so it was there that he decided to go first.

However, it was a further two days before the 11th Armoured, advancing north from Winsen on the River Aller, penetrated the neutral area, its 29th Armoured Brigade taking the Winsen to Bergen road which led directly past the camp entrance. About 10 a.m. on April 15, Brigadier Roscoe Harvey, the brigade commander, passed the camp with his HQ party, and told Lieutenant-Colonel Bob Daniell, CO of the 13th Regiment, RHA, to inspect it. Daniell was the very first British officer to enter the camp and his short inspection left him horrified.

At 1.30 p.m., Colonel Taylor sent his liaison officer, Captain P. T. Ashton, to contact Oberst Harries, the garrison commander, to arrange a meeting at the entrance of the military barracks.

On December 2, 1944, Haas, by now a Sturmbannführer, was relieved by SS-Hauptsturmführer Josef Kramer. Kramer was the quintessential Nazi camp official: unscrupulous and brutal towards prisoners while servile towards superiors. Born November 10, 1906 in Munich, he had joined the NSDAP in 1931 and the SS in 1932. In 1934, he became an SS guard at Dachau and, from then on, pursued a professional career in the concentration camp service, serving at Esterwegen in 1934, again Dachau in 1936, as commander's adjutant at Sachsenhausen in 1937 and Mauthausen in 1939, before becoming deputy commander at Auschwitz in 1940, then camp commander of Natzweiler in 1942. In May 1944, he was appointed commander of Birkenau, the death mill of the Auschwitz complex, where under his tenure hundreds of thousands Hungarian Jews were murdered within the space of a few months. When ordered to take over Belsen, he took with him many members of the Birkenau staff, among them a number of SS wardresses. (IWM)

The liberation of Belsen was part of a cease-fire proposed by the local German military commanders on April 12, and accepted by the British that night, in order to avoid a spread of the typhus epidemic which the Germans disclosed was raging in what they called an 'internee camp'. The German emissaries were Oberst Hanns Schmidt, deputy commander of the Bergen military training ground, and Oberstleutnant Bohnekamp, deputy commander of the local Kampfgruppe Grosan. Here, Brigadier Balfour-Taylor, Chief-of-Staff of British VIII Corps and a staff captain set off with Schmidt and Bohnekamp, the Germans' eyes bandaged for security reasons, for the German lines to discuss the terms with higher German commanders. In spite of a very extensive search of Schwarmstedt (where VIII Corps HQ was on April 12) and Buchholz (HQ of 159th Brigade of 11th Armoured Division to where the Germans had been brought first), the farm has not been identified. (IWM)

Meanwhile, Lieutenant Sington and his loudspeaker lorry had already entered the neutral zone with a column of the 23rd Hussars and reached the camp entrance. Waiting at the gate stood camp commander Kramer and a small group of SS, Wehrmacht and Hungarian officers, who all saluted Sington as he got out. From the gate, Sington could not see into the camp proper, masked as it was by the SS compound in front. When he asked about the state of the camp, Kramer replied: 'They are calm at present'. Sington therefore proposed to go in and broadcast an announcement but a Hungarian captain said it would be too risky because of the typhus. Kramer added that: 'It would be unwise to risk a tumult' so Sington decided to wait for the arrival of Colonel Taylor.

A few minutes later, Taylor arrived, with an escort of one NCO and six men, and leading two troops of 17-pdrs of 249 Battery. Not wasting any time, he told Sington to go in and make his announcement, before driving on up the road towards the Wehrmacht barracks at Bergen. The time was 3.07 p.m.

With Kramer standing on the running-board, Sington drove his vehicle through the gate, past the SS buildings, until he came to a ten-foot-high barbed-wire fence. He later wrote: 'It reminded me of the entrance to a zoo. Once through the gate this resemblance was strengthened. On the left of the thoroughfare stood row upon row of green wooden huts, and we came into a smell of ordure — like the smell of a monkey-house. A sad blue smoke floated like a ground mist between the low buildings. I had tried to visualise the interior of a concentration camp but had not imagined it like this. Nor had I imagined the strange simian throng, who crowded to the barbed wire fences surrounding the compounds, with their shaven heads and their obscene penitentiary suits, which were so dehumanising.'

As he rolled on through the camp, crowds of prisoners began surging through the barbed wire into the thoroughfare. A German soldier began firing his rifle over their heads. Sington stopped him at the point of his revolver. Suddenly, to Sington's incredulity, some prisoners began hitting the crowd with sticks and leather belts. The Kapo system was still at work. Turning his lorry into the Large Women's Camp, Sington stopped and made his broadcast. He announced that liberation had come, that help was on the way, but that no one must leave the camp because of the danger of spreading typhus. Within seconds, the car was surrounded by hundreds of crying, hailing women. Driving back to the main entrance, Sington dropped off Kramer, and turned up the road to rejoin Colonel Taylor.

When he arrived at the camp after noon on April 15, Lieutenant Derrick Sington of the 14th Amplifier Unit met Kramer at the camp main gate (which gave access to the SS compound, but offered no direct view of the camp proper) and got his first glimpses of the horror camp when he drove in with his loudspeaker van to broadcast his first announcement. This is the main gate as seen from within. (GBB)

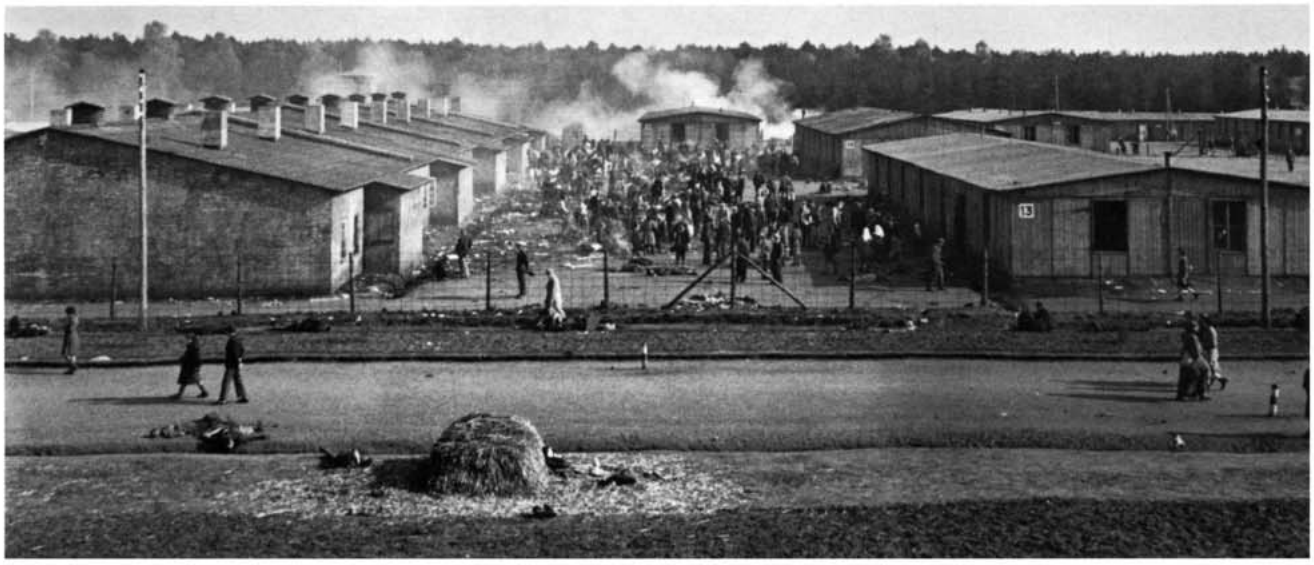
The same view today. Once the gate to 'hell on earth', now just a track leading into the woods. Nothing — not even a trace of its foundation — remains of the guard-house on the right.

Part of the truce agreement was the hand-over of the military barracks of the Panzertruppenschule (Panzer Training School) which lay less than a mile away, near Bergen. A modern barracks, it had well-equipped housing blocks, canteens, kitchens, an officers mess, a cinema, and eight hospital blocks. (It was for housing the workers building these barracks that the original huts of what later became the concentration camp had been erected back in 1936.) Assigned to take over the barracks and the camp was the 63rd Anti-Tank Regiment, commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel Dick Taylor. Taylor, with two troops of his 249 Battery, first went to the military barracks to confer with Oberst Karl Harries, the commander of the Bergen military training area. *Above left:* **The meeting took place at the Kommandantur. (IWM)** *Above right:* **The Panzer Training School is today NATO Camp Hohne, one of the largest NATO complexes in Northern Germany and well known to the British Army. The Kommandantur building, adjoining the northern gate, remains completely unchanged.**

Left: **The towed 17-pounder guns and other vehicles of the 63rd Anti-Tank Regiment parked on one of the central squares of the barracks complex. (IWM)** *Right:* **The westernmost of the two squares, looking north.**

By this time, Taylor and his artillery column had reached the Panzer Training School barracks to be met by Oberst Harries and his deputy, Schmidt, at the gate. Taylor announced he was the Allied Military Commander and demanded quarters for his troops. Questioning Harries, he learned that there were some 800 German and 3,000 Hungarian troops in the barracks area but that the nearby concentration camp was the sole responsibility of the SS. Harries said that he acted only as a liaison with them. He also reported that sentries and typhus warning notices had been posted on all roads leading to the camp.

The barracks was garrisoned by some 800 German and 3,000 Hungarian troops (Hungary was allied to Germany and Bergen was also the training school for the Hungarian Army armoured corps). Under the truce, the garrison was allowed to retain its arms, the Hungarians remaining at the disposal of the British and the Germans to be returned to their own lines within six days. Here, a British gunner corporal and a Hungarian soldier guard the barracks entrance. Note the white armband around the Hungarian's arm, prescribed part of the truce terms. These pictures by AFPU photographer Sergeant Harry Oakes. (IWM)



At the camp itself, Huts 11 (left) and 13 originally belonged to different sections of the camp, No. 11 being one of the two huts of the Hungarians' Camp and No. 13 being one of those erected in the Star Camp after September 1944. However, by 1945, the last of the Hungarian Jews had been exchanged to Switzerland, and the ever-expanding Prisoners' Camp had taken over their huts and also pushed the Star Camp further west. The wire fence that separated the two enclosures has also been shifted. Behind Hut 13 is what is left of the Appellplatz square. Note the unburied corpses lying about among the milling inmates and on the Lagerstrasse in the foreground. (IWM)

At this point, the 11th Armoured's Phantom officer, Captain W. J. Gray, informed Taylor that shooting had broken out in the concentration camp. A German captain reported a phone call from the camp: 'It appears a loudspeaker went into the camp and has started a disturbance', so Taylor, with Barnett, Sington and the two German colonels, started out for the camp to inspect.

At the gate, they met Kramer. His administrative personnel was not supposed to be armed but, so he stated, if disarmed, they would be overpowered by the inmates. Seeing no other immediate way to administer the camp, Taylor allowed the SS to temporarily remain armed, but told Kramer that shooting was immediately to stop and that he would be held personally responsible. He then ordered one troop of 249 Battery to come to the camp to keep order. Cross-questioned by Taylor in his office, with Sington as interpreter, Kramer stated that all prisoner files had been destroyed on orders from Berlin; that there were approximately 40,000

From Lagerstrasse to forest lane . . . 50 years on.

Hut 11 was one of three adjoining larger-type, stone huts in the camp. The foundations of the two others, Nos 9 and 10, have now been excavated *(left)*. Hut 9 served as a store and workshop. The front section of No. 10 contained the Special Camp for Polish Jews. The rear section formed part of the Hungarians' Camp. *Right:* More or less at the spot where the corpse lay in the street, a part of the Lagerstrasse curb has been laid bare as well.

Under Kramer's rule, catastrophe set in. Although an endless stream of prisoners was coming in, the SS did not even make an attempt to supply food, sanitation or medicine for the totally overcrowded camp. Between January and mid-April 1945, it is estimated that 35,000 people died from hunger or epidemics.

Thousands of corpses were left lying about all over the camp. In the Large Women's Camp, the bodies were collected in two huge piles under the trees. *Left:* **Here, weakened inmates carry a corpse to one of them. (IWM)** *Right:* **All that remains of Hut 210 is the sewer pit just outside the memorial fence.**

inmates in the camp; that there was enough food in the camp to feed the prisoners for three days; that so far no prisoners had escaped; and that SS personnel numbered about 25 (a nominal roll showed 50 names).

About this time, Brigadier H. L. Glyn Hughes, the Deputy Director of Medical Services (DDMS), Second Army, arrived.

Just then, a Wehrmacht Hauptmann hurried up reporting that there was rioting in one of the cookhouses and that food had been stolen. Taking Kramer with them, Taylor, Hughes, Sington and the rest of the party set off for the cookhouse. Apart from Sington, none of the British had yet seen the camp proper. As they walked the 200 yards to it, an occasional shot was heard being fired from inside. Entering through the barbed-wire gate, guarded by Hungarian sentries, and proceeding down the dusty, fence-lined camp road past the separate enclosures, Taylor saw the internees for the first time: 'A great number of them were little more than living skeletons, with haggard yellowish faces. Most of them wore a striped pyjama type of clothing — others wore rags, while the women wore striped flannel gowns, or any other garment they had managed to acquire. Many of them were without shoes and wore only socks and stockings. There were men and women lying in heaps on both sides of the track. Others were walking slowly and aimlessly about — a vacant expression on their starved faces.'

On arrival at the kitchen shed, equipped with 30 cauldrons, the British officers found it deserted. An SS guard showed them one copper still full of turnip and potato soup but about a foot below the rim. This was what had been reported as 'storming the kitchen'. Food, the SS man said, had also been stolen from the potato patch further down. As the party made its way there, shots were still ringing out. When they reached a heap of

The cistern in the Large Women's Camp had originally served as reservoir for the Stalag hospital shower baths. One of the bath huts can be seen on the right. However, by April 1945, the showers were defunct and the basin just a filthy pond. (IWM)

For more than 40 years, the Belsen memorial authorities were content to ignore the potential remains which lay outside their particular area — the south-western corner of the old camp.

Left: **This is the overgrown storage pond as found by Karel in September 1992 but by the 50th anniversary in April 1995, it had been excavated and cleaned out** *(right).*

rotten potatoes near the crematorium, the party found 6 or 7 corpses of inmates who had obviously just been shot while others lay about wounded and crying out with pain. None of the SS in the vicinity made any attempt to help them. Enraged, the British forced the SS, Kramer included, to carry the wounded to one of the camp sick bays.

Gently, the British party persuaded the women who were swarming around to return to their quarters. A ghastly sight met them when they entered the huts for the first time. People lay three persons to a bunk designed to hold one or on the floor, in foul rags covered in human excreta, and running alive with lice. Those in the top bunks who could not get out just evacuated their bladders and bowels onto the ones below. Hughes recorded: 'It was the most moving and heart-rending sight to see these poor creatures, to hear their weak animal cries, many only just able to realise that there might still exist a ray of hope for them. In one hut, I counted 20 women in 35 square feet of space, and many huts contained over 1,000 in an area which normally should not have held more than 80 to 100 at the most.' Overwhelmed by a feeling of hopelessness, and wondering how to even begin to set in motion the machinery that might save these people, Brigadier Hughes cried unashamedly.

As Colonel Taylor entered one hut, a weak voice called out: 'Isn't it Mr. Dick?' It was a French woman who had been his mother's maid. She had been seized from her Paris flat 18 months before for helping Allied airmen to escape.

Shortly after Lieutenant Sington and his lone loudspeaker lorry had entered the camp, Colonel Taylor and Brigadier Llywelyn Glyn Hughes, the Senior Doctor of Second Army, arrived to be shocked in their turn by the sights confronting them. *Right:* **This picture, taken by Captain Malindine in one of the hospital huts two days later, only weakly illustrates the scene recorded by Hughes as he entered one of the women's huts: 'They were lying on the floor and were so weak they could hardly move. There was practically no bedding. In some cases there was a thin mattress but some had none. Some had no clothing at all and just draped themselves in blankets and some had German hospital type of clothing. That was the general picture.' (IWM)**

Few people walking the circuit path of the memorial grounds today will be able to conjure up the horror of 50 years ago.

That evening, Lieutenant-Colonel Taylor took the precaution of placing Kramer in an underground cellar, a dark cell in which fish had been kept, below the officers quarters. He was made to sleep on the concrete floor without blankets, his feet were shackled, and he was given a small boiled potato each 48 hours. John D'Arcy-Dawson saw him in his cell: 'His nerve was going by the end of the third day. When I went in, he jumped to his feet and put his hands over his face. He expected to be hanged every time the door opened.' Kramer was brought out several times to be questioned by the Field Security Police.

Left: **This picture was taken in what had been the SS compound of the camp. (IWM)** *Right:* **Also captured by the British were some 25 SS wardresses. War correspondent Alan Moorehead was shown them when he visited the camp: 'Some 20 women wearing dirty grey skirts and tunics were sitting and lying on the floor. "Get up", the sergeant roared in English. They got up and stood in attention and we looked at them. Thin ones, fat ones, scraggy ones and muscular ones; all of them ugly and one or two of them distinctly cretinous.' In addition to the women, some 28 male SS were taken into custody.**

By now, it was 9 p.m. and getting dark. As the shocked British party walked back to the camp entrance, the men of the 63rd Anti-Tank Regiment were arriving. Horrified by what he had seen, Taylor ordered Kramer arrested and confined to his own quarters; realising that the situation was far beyond the resources of his artillery unit, he sent a liaison officer to VIII Corps Headquarters with an urgent request for food, water and further aid. First to arrive was No. 76 Field Hygiene Section (Major F. R. Waldon) which immediately began working on sanitation in the camp. Later, medical and Military Government staff officers arrived.

Many liberators wondered what had possessed Kramer and his 50 'administrative SS' to await the coming of the British, and not escape before that. Lieutenant Sington commented: 'It is a strange commentary on their utter ignorance of all Western standards and codes of morals and behaviour that they should have believed their collaboration would be accepted. It also indicates the extent to which their sense of wickedness had been dulled by years of brutish crime.' Few remains of the buildings in the SS compound can be found today. This is the foundation of the delousing station, the large building (No. 314 on the plan on pages 4-5) where incoming prisoners were bathed and deloused before entering the camp.

Having put Kramer under close arrest on the evening of April 15, next morning an enraged Lieutenant-Colonel Taylor forced an unwilling Kramer to lead a more thorough inspection of the camp. The man standing over Kramer in the Jeep is Military Police Sergeant George Robinson, who had been a party to his arrest the day before. (This rare picture was supplied by Robinson's son, Nigel.) War correspondent John D'Arcy-Dawson was present when the party reached one of the open mass graves: 'He stood there, this colossus of a man, his eyes unwinking, his face expressionless. The BGS, VIII Corps, turned a white face to the interpreter. "Tell him", he said venomously, "that when he hangs I hope he hangs slowly." The interpreter translated. Kramer was unmoved. The BGS turned to the military policemen and told them he would hold them personally responsible if Kramer committed suicide. Captain Kirk pointed out that the cord tying the camouflage jacket round the waist would make a good rope. The BGS ordered his men to strip Kramer to the waist and remove his braces and his boots. Hobbling over the sharp gravel, his great fat stomach and back naked to the wind, Kramer made his way to the Jeep, the crowds of women whom he had treated so vilely clapping and dancing and making little hoarse whispering sounds as they tried to cheer.' On April 18, Field Security removed Kramer to a PoW camp at Celle. (GBB)

At 8.30 a.m. next morning, after picking up Oberst Harries, Taylor, Glyn Hughes and Sington returned to the camp. Kramer was placed in a Jeep with three military policemen to lead a more thorough investigation. The British party saw the crematorium and the covered mass grave nearby, and saw two large piles of naked corpses in the Women's Camp and the uncovered pit further on. Sington broadcast a message telling the prisoners that German rule was over, and that food and water was on the way.

The full horror of the situation only now became clear. Of the 40,000 men, women and children in the camp — 28,000 female and 12,000 male — most were in the last stages of exhaustion from prolonged starvation. Typhus, tuberculosis and dysentery were rampant. The inmates had had no food or water for four days. Their clothes were mere rags and full of lice. Many were so weak that they just lay on the ground and took no notice of what was happening. Some 10,000 unburied, typhus-infected corpses were lying about in the camp. Some of them were in heaps, some were lying where they had been dragged, and large numbers were still in the huts, the occupants being too weak or apathetic to carry them out. At the far end of the camp, in the south-western corner, were several huge open pits with thousands of naked bodies in various stages of decomposition. In some cases, scraps had been cut from the legs, and heart and liver removed, clear signs of cannibalism.

Left: **Belsen's small single-furnace crematorium was built by the Bau-Kommando in April-June 1943 at the far end of the camp to cater for the needs of the 'Detention Camp'. However, with a capacity of incinerating only three corpses at a time, it was of course totally insufficient to cope with the thousands of prisoners that were dying at Belsen in the last months of the war. (IWM)** *Right:* **The furnace after the wooden shed in which it stood had been burned down.**

There was no electricity or running water and sanitation was non-existent. Too weak to get to the few latrines, prisoners defecated and urinated wherever they sat or lay, and the whole camp was literally covered with human excreta and an unbelievable stench pervaded the whole area.

Returning to the military barracks, Taylor and Hughes inspected the part where, the day before, another 15,000 prisoners, all men, had been found. Conditions here were not so bad, the internees living in stone barracks, guarded by some 400 Hungarians, and although most inmates showed signs of serious starvation, there was no typhus. The officer in charge, SS-Hauptsturmführer Franz Hössler, stated there was food for seven days, that soup was served three times daily, and that only about half of the 34 SS personnel were still present. Taylor told him all shooting was to stop, and that one SS man would be shot for every inmate killed.

Today, the site of the crematorium is marked by a pedestal with a bronze relief map of the camp indicating the precise spot.

In March 1945, the SS tried burning the corpses in huge pyres, but this practice was soon discontinued because the forestry administration prohibited the use of wood for this purpose, and the officers of the Wehrmacht training grounds were annoyed by the disgusting stench which was borne on the air for miles around. *Right:* **A small mass grave now marks the site.**

In the efforts to save as many of the inmates as possible, one of the biggest problems was the shortage of water. On the second day, 27 water-carts from VIII Corps reached the camp. When the British discovered a brook a few hundred metres away, in a very short time a water conduit was laid from this brook to the camp using materials found on site, thereby showing that Kramer could have solved the water problem if he had wanted to. Here, water is pumped to one of the cookhouse cisterns (marked H on the plan) along the Lagerstrasse. In the background are the huts of the Star Camp, the one nearest the camera being No. 39. On the right is the 'shoe mountain'. Picture taken by Sergeant Oakes on April 21. (IWM)

least 30,000 of the inmates needed urgent hospital attention although it was appreciated that one-third of these were probably already past all hope. The Wehrmacht barracks, handed over as part of the truce, offered excellent facilities, and these were to be made ready to accommodate those rescued from Camp 1.

By 5 p.m., 24 hours after discovery of the camp, the first rations, water-carts and coal reached Belsen. There was no attempt by the inmates to rush the food lorries or water-carts but, with little or no control or supervision of distribution, the stronger inmates got all the food and left the weaker to die. Also, many of those who did get some food killed themselves in the process by eating too much, their atrophied intestines unable to cope with the rich British Army diet. Typhus raged on. On the night of April 16/17, an estimated 500 people died.

Next day, April 17, No. 11 Light Field Ambulance (Lieutenant-Colonel M. W. Gonin) arrived to take charge of medical matters in Camp 1, and No. 32 Casualty Clearing Station (Lieutenant-Colonel J. A. D. Johnston) arrived to prepare the hospital area in the military barracks. Colonel Johnston was appointed Senior Medical Officer, Belsen, supervising medical arrangements throughout all camps and hospitals. No. 30 Field Hygiene Section (Major P. J. Fox) arrived to take charge of typhus control, and No. 7 Mobile Bacteriological Laboratory to assume responsibility for the

To distinguish the main camp from the extension in the barracks, the British named the former Camp 1 and the latter Camp 2. By now, 172 Light Anti-Aircraft Battery (Major Chapman) had arrived to support 63rd Anti-Tank Regiment, and Taylor sent one troop to administer Camp 2. Earlier, he had sent a second troop of 249 Battery to help at Camp 1.

That same morning, Glyn Hughes conferred with the BGS, VIII Corps, Brigadier Taylor-Balfour; the DDMS, VIII Corps, Brigadier J. Melvin; the Deputy-Adjutant and Quartermaster-General; and the Deputy Director of Military Government, VIII Corps, at the camp to coordinate arrangements. All available resources of VIII Corps and Second Army were to be used to relieve conditions in the camp. The most urgent tasks were to provide food and water; to get those who could benefit into hospital, and to bury the dead and clean up the camp. At

Right: **Unlike the cisterns lying outside the memorial perimeter, those inside have been completely cleared away.**

In order to better care for the thousands of starved and sick inmates, the nearby military barracks was quickly turned into a gigantic hospital. The huge transfer operation began on April 21. *Left:* **Hungarian soldiers were put to work helping to carry those too weak to walk to the hospital wards. Another picture from CMP Sergeant Robinson.** *Right:* **All buildings have retained their old designation which makes it very easy to find Block MB 90 in the labyrinth of Camp Hohne.**

The small stone building on the left stood halfway between Huts 210 and 211 on the opposite side of the track. (IWM)

Meanwhile, the arrested SS were put to work removing the piles of dead from among the trees of the Large Women's Camp. Sergeant Midgley, who took these pictures together with Sergeant Oakes, recalled: 'They were kept on the move by our soldiers, picking up bodies from a heap and throwing them unceremoniously onto the trucks. The other inmates watched the loading, booing and shouting and throwing stones at the SS thugs. When the trucks were loaded, the SS men were made to jump on top of the pile of bodies and the truck drove off to the burial place. On one of these trips, one SS man jumped off and ran away. He only got a short distance before he was shot dead by a rain of bullets to the cheers of the crowd.'

reception and disinfection of patients before admission to hospital. No. 224 Military Government Detachment assumed responsibility for the control of both camps, its main task being the fair distribution of food. (Two other MG Detachments, Nos. 618 and 904, were later sent to join it). Initially, food and clothing were levied from the surrounding villages, but later normal channels of procurement were used. All relief units leaned heavily on the gunners of the 63rd Anti-Tank Regiment.

As the SS personnel made no material difference in the administration of Camp 1, Colonel Taylor had them all arrested and 28 men and 25 women were rounded up. Kramer's deputy was missing at first, but later discovered disguised as an internee. The SS in Camp 2 had already been taken into custody the day before.

To visually document the horror camp for the world, for posterity, and for the war crimes trials that were certain to follow, a special team from No. 5 Army Film and Photographic Unit was assigned to Belsen. It arrived on the 17th and stayed until the camp was dissolved.

Meanwhile, the horrible task of disposing of the thousands of unburied corpses was being carried out. This was mainly the responsibility of the Royal Artillery units. Use was made of the half-filled open grave pits found at liberation, but there were so many corpses that several new pits had to be dug. This was done by bulldozers and by the Hungarian troops with picks and shovels.

Every mass grave filled after liberation was given a number — this became Grave No. 2.

SS women filling one of the pits under the watchful eyes of armed guards. Freed inmates watch from behind the fence of the Small Women's Camp. (IWM)

The arrested SS personnel, both men and women, were forced at gun point to collect the corpses onto trucks and carts and manhandle them into the pits (with the result that at least 17 of the SS men developed typhus and died because of it). It was vital that the dead be buried before the hot summer started cholera, but its soon became clear that the rate of burial was too slow. In what was to be captured in some of the most gruesome images of all the camps, many of the corpses lying about the area of the former tent camp were pushed into communal graves by a Royal Engineers' bulldozer. It was impossible to keep an accurate count of the number of bodies buried. Between April 17 and 30, some 15,000 to 20,000 were interred in mass graves, most of them clustered in the south-western corner of the camp. Before each grave was covered over, a chaplain and a Jewish rabbi held a religious service and, after the bulldozer had sealed it, a sign was put up with the date, grave number, and number of dead.

Prompt burial was essential to prevent further spread of disease. When it was realised that digging pits by hand would be too slow, the difficult decision was taken to use a bulldozer. This is the open area of the former Tent Camp. The huts in the background are Block 42 on the left and the latrine hut in the Star Camp on the right. The photographs of the bulldozer at work (taken by Sergeant Harry Oakes) remain among the most shocking images of the Second World War but no one seems to have given much thought to the poor driver from No. 619 Field Park Company. The first man detailed just could not stomach the job, so Sapper Frank Chapman who had joined the Royal Engineers in 1942, took over. 'The sight was awful and the stench was terrible. The first thing was that I was covered in DDT powder. I didn't think it was right but there was a great risk of an epidemic — you just had to get on with it. There were bodies lying all about so I started to push them in which made the job go faster. It did not take long. We had to wash down with petrol to get rid of the lice and our clothes were burned each night. I used to wear a mask to reduce the risk of inhaling germs and to lessen the smell . . . the dreadful smell of disease and death.'

No accurate count was possible, but it was estimated that about 1,000 corpses had been pushed in this pit which was later marked as Grave No. 1. Identification of the various known grave pits and the pictures taken of them is somewhat confusing. First there were those already dug by the Germans and covered by them located near the crematorium. Then there were those already dug and half filled with corpses and used by the British — like that on page 18. Finally, there were those dug by bulldozer (Frank says about eight) — easy to identify because of the rough nature of the sides — like Grave No. 1. (RIOD)

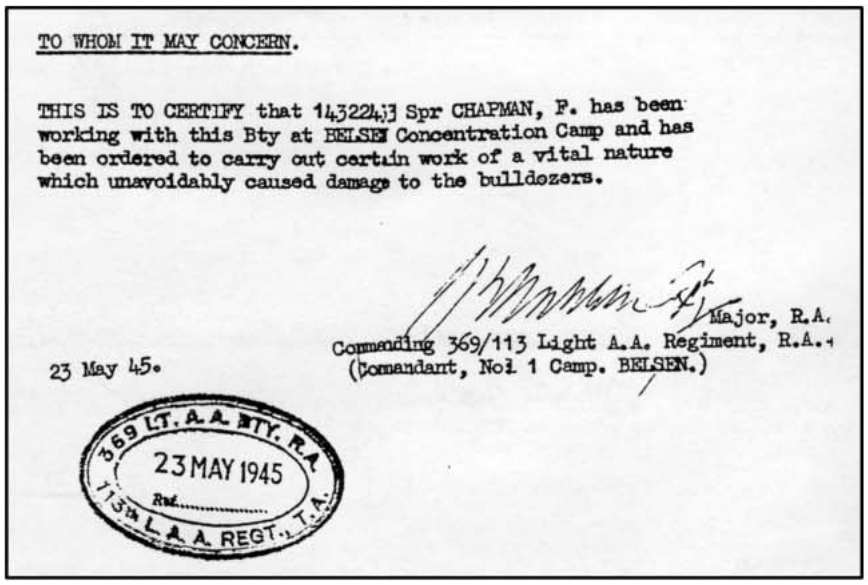
In addition, there were the mass graves covered before liberation where the number of dead was not known. In the end, of the various mass graves, 11 were numbered. The total number of victims of Belsen between 1943 and 1945 was an estimated 50,000, most of them Jews.

On April 18, Headquarters No. 10 Garrison arrived and took over military control of the camp and barracks area. The 113rd LAA Regiment (Second Army Troops) arrived to relieve the 63rd Anti-Tank Regiment, the actual take-over occurring next day: 369 Battery took over Camp 1 and 370 Battery Camp 2, the prison, and guard duties, and 368 Battery took charge of the hospital area and the armoury on the 21st.

Meanwhile, Colonel Taylor was busy arranging the evacuation of the Wehrmacht troops from the military barracks to make room for the rescued inmates. At first, word was that the administrative part of the garrison (about 500) would be allowed to stay behind; then Oberst Harries told Taylor that most of his men would prefer to become prisoners-of-war, but a direct order from Second Army on April 19 stipulated that all Wehrmacht personnel were to return to their own lines. Owing to the transport arriving late, they did not in fact leave until 8.30 a.m. on the 20th, the convoy of 800 being escorted by 172 LAA Battery. (The German military wounded, some 2,000, were not evacuated until May 4.)

Before they could be transferred to the military barracks, all former inmates had to be disinfected by field hygiene personnel wearing protective clothing. In view of the appalling sights and smells, the RAMC men found themselves unable to work in the huts for more than ten minutes at a time and, in spite of precautions, 20 of them developed typhus. Anti-typhus measures were directed by an American, Captain W. A. Davis, the

Above: **Grave No. 1 photographed on April 27, 1995 — Yom Ha Shaoh (The Jewish Day of Remembrance for Victims of Nazism) — and the day chosen by the Jewish Central Council in Germany to mark not only the liberation of Belsen but also that of all the other concentration camps. Frank Chapman had made his personal pilgrimage to Belsen the previous month on the exact anniversary — the first time he had been back. 'I was amazed at what they had done. It was a man-made heaven compared to what it was when I last saw it 50 years ago.' When Frank's presence became known to the memorial authorities, he showed them this chit** *(below left)* **that he had been given for damage to the clutch on his Caterpillar D6 (he went on to bulldoze the huts). As a result, an official invitation was extended to him to return, all expenses paid, to attend the official commemoration on April 27** *(below right)*. **'I took them up on the honour', Frank told us. 'I think I had earned it.' (Tony Bethel)**



TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN.

THIS IS TO CERTIFY that 14322433 Spr CHAPMAN, F. has been working with this Bty at BELSEN Concentration Camp and has been ordered to carry out certain work of a vital nature which unavoidably caused damage to the bulldozers.

Major, R.A.
Commanding 369/113 Light A.A. Regiment, R.A.
(Commandant, No. 1 Camp. BELSEN.)

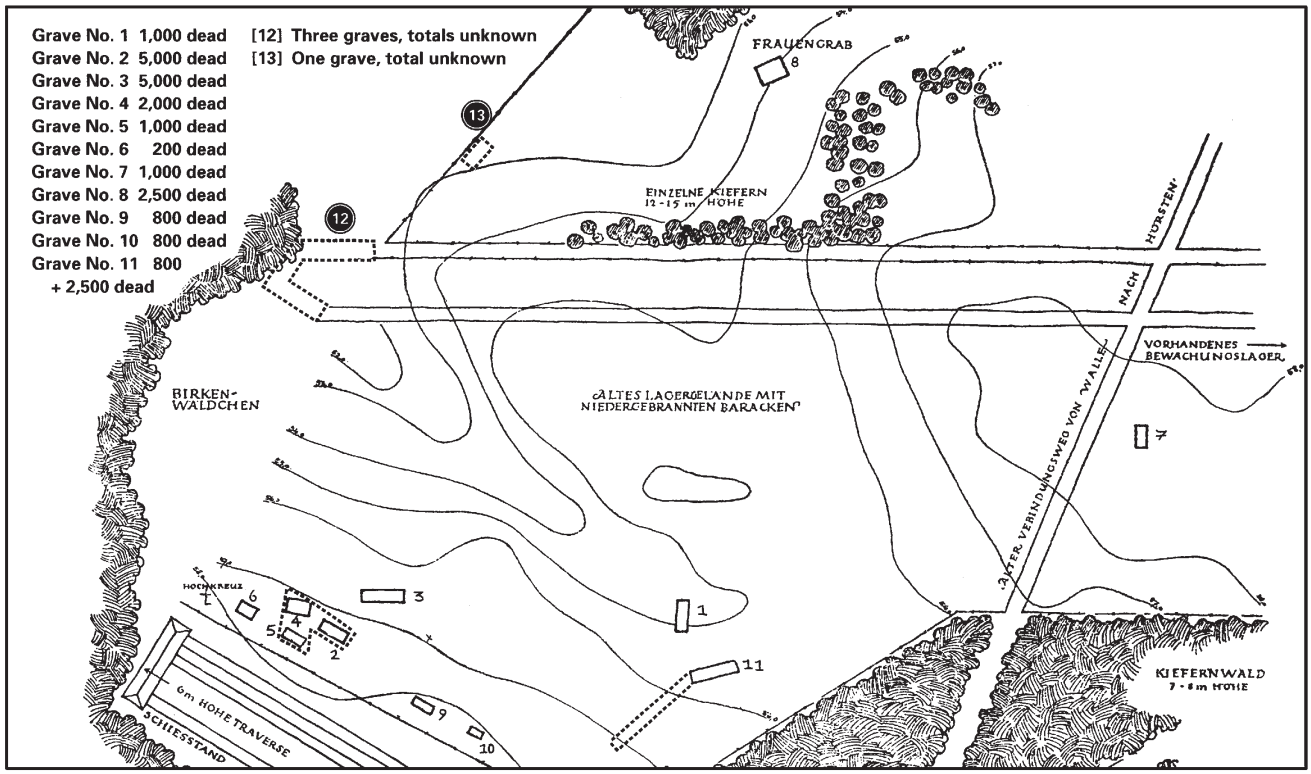
23 May 45.

369 LT. A.A. BTY. R.A. 23 MAY 1945 Ref. 113th L.A.A. REGT., T.A.

Most of the grave pits lay in the extreme south-western corner of the camp, although it is difficult to determine which had already been dug by the Germans from those dug after liberation. This is Grave No. 2, with No. 5 behind on the left and No. 6 on the extreme right. The wall in the background is the stop butt of the Wehrmacht firing range which lay immediately alongside the camp. Another picture taken by Sidney Barlow.

Consultant in Typhus attached to British 21st Army Group from the US Typhus Commission. Slowly, the typhus epidemic was halted, then pushed back.

Some 50 doctors and 150 nurses, some trained and some not, who had been inmates in the camp tried to help the British personnel as much as possible, although most were too ill or starved to be very effective. Dr Hadassa Bimko, a Polish Jewess who had lost her entire family in the camps, had come to Belsen from Auschwitz on November 23, 1944, and had kept up the hospital in the Women's Camp with practically no equipment or medicine, was appointed Senior Internee Doctor.



Above: **For some unknown reason, not all the pits are marked on this February 1946 plan so we have shown (dotted) the variations and other graves which are known to exist today.**

Below left: **Grave No. 3 — Sydney Barlow has caught Sergeant Oakes (on the left) at work with his camera.** *Below right*: **Nice comparison in April 1995 with a TV cameraman at work.**

On April 24, all the SS men and women, together with local civil officials, were lined up beside Grave No. 3 to listen to a speech by a British officer through the loudspeaker van: 'You, who are the fathers of German youth, see in front of your eyes some of the sons and daughters who carry a small part of the responsibility for these crimes. Only a small part and yet more difficult to carry than the human soul possibly can. But who carries the real responsibility? You, who allowed your Führer to carry out this flagrant madness; you, who could not get enough of these degenerate triumphs; you, who heard about these camps.' In the background, the huts of the Small Women's Camp, with Hut 50 on the far left. (IWM)

General Dempsey of British Second Army issued special passes permitting war correspondents from the Press Camp at Oyler to visit and describe the camp. Probably the first to reach Belsen, early on the 16th and in time to see Kramer lead the inspection tour of the camp, was John D'Arcy-Dawson of *The Sunday Times*.

Richard Dimbleby of the BBC came to Belsen on the 18th. As he tried to record his first impressions with his engineer, Harvey Sarney, Dimbleby broke down for the first time in his career, not once but five times. Then, to his rage and anguish, the BBC simply refused to believe, or to broadcast, his report unless they got confirmation from other sources. Only after Dimbleby telephoned the newsroom with the ultimatum that he would never again broadcast in his life unless the report went through, did the BBC air his eyewitness report on the 19th. Thus, a stunned world learned for the first time of the barbarity of Belsen, the AFPU films and photos reinforcing the picture visually.

That same day, British Movietone News made recordings at the mass graves. *Left:* One of those forced to speak was SS-Obersturmführer Franz Hössler. Born February 4, 1906, Hössler had been Lagerführer at Auschwitz and later at Camp 'Dora' at Nordhausen, and had come to Belsen when that camp was evacuated in early April. He had commanded the camp section at the military barracks. *Right:* Another was the SS camp doctor, Fritz Klein. Although he had only arrived at Belsen a few weeks before liberation (his colleague, Dr Rudolf Horstmann who had been camp doctor from February to April, having escaped capture, and the sadistic doctor of the Prisoners Camp, Dr Jäger, having been relieved of his post earlier), Klein had been at Auschwitz-Birkenau, where he had carried out selections for the gas chambers, and had shown as little compassion with the inmates of Belsen. With the woman on the right, a former inmate, acting as interpreter and prodding him on, Klein said (in German): 'My name is Dr Fritz Klein. I have been a doctor in concentration camps for one and a half years. I was born on November 24, 1888, am thus 58 years old, a German from Rumania, and am talking today on April 24, 1945.' Both SS men were later sentenced to death and hanged at Hameln on December 13, 1945. (IWM)

In order to kill the typhus germs, as each hut was cleared it was burned down, being set alight by Wasp flame-throwing carriers. These pictures were taken by Sergeant Hewitt on May 19. (IWM)

Evacuation of the acutely sick from Camp 1 to the military barracks began on April 21. It had been delayed by one day because the German troops had seen fit to cut the water supply to the barracks before they moved out. There were far too many sick to help all of them, so a selection had to be made. British medical officers went through the huts to mark those who had at least a small chance of recovery with a cross on the forehead. Hundreds of others, too far gone, had to be left to die. Those selected were stripped of all clothing and disinfected in Camp 1 and then, wrapped in blankets, moved to the so-called Human Laundry, set up in the stable block of the barracks, where they were washed, shaved, and powdered with DDT.

The transfer of the relatively fit began on April 24. They were disinfected and moved either to Camp 2, or to a new Camp 3 which was being set up at the far end of the barracks. Ultimately, Camp 2 was used for men and Camp 3 for women. The move to Camp 2 began later than had been hoped owing to a slow start with the dispersal of the fitter inmates from that camp to normal Displaced Persons camps. That first day, room was made for only 23 persons, but next day 515 persons from Camp 1 entered Camp 2.

Over the next two weeks, evacuation proceeded at an average of 1,100 persons per day. In all, some 29,000 of the 40,000 inmates of Camp 1 were moved to the barracks.

So pressing was the need for more medical personnel that a decision was made to make use of German doctors and nurses. Many patients were terrified by this, but there was no real choice and the German medical personnel proved able and efficient.

By April 26, although typhus had broken out in Camp 3, the daily death rate had decreased from 500 a day to about 300, an average which continued for a week, until May 3, when it dropped to 223. On May 11, the number dropped below 100 for the first time. On May 19, there was only one death. In all, some 13,000 inmates died, either in Camp 1 or in the barracks, between April 15 and the end of June.

To cope with the large numbers of hospital cases, additional medical units were sent to Belsen. On April 28, No. 9 British General Hospital reached the spot, its main force with 600 beds arriving on May 4. On May 8 came No. 163 Field Ambulance followed by No. 35 Casualty Clearing Station on May 14 and, finally, No. 29 General Hospital with 1,200 beds on May 19.

That same day, evacuation of Camp 1 was completed when the last 421 persons were moved out. All buildings of the camp were to be destroyed by fire as the only sure way to get rid of the typhus germs. As soon as a hut had been emptied of its last occupants, it was set alight by flame-thrower carriers and the last hut, No. 44, was ceremoniously burned down on May 21.

On May 21, the last hut was ceremoniously set alight at a special parade, attended by Brigadier Glyn Hughes and other officers and 300 former inmates. Hut 44 lay here in the old SS depot, latterly the Women's Camp. The memorial obelisk in the left background was dedicated in 1952.

Left: **No British flag had yet been flown over Belsen camp, but now the Union Jack was raised to symbolise the victory of democracy over the Nazi-totalitarian regime. Colonel Johnston of No. 32 Casualty Clearing Station fired a flare-pistol into a big picture of Hitler hung on Hut 44, after which it was set alight by a Wasp** *(right).* **(IWM)**

Left: **Josef Kramer and Irma Grese in the high-security prison at Celle, photographed on August 8, awaiting their trial. Irma Grese became notorious as one of the more cruel SS wardresses at Belsen. Born October 7, 1923, she began her SS career as nurse in the SS sanatorium Hohenlynchen in 1939. In 1942, she volunteered for training as SS wardress at Ravensbrück, serving there and from March 1943 at Auschwitz and Birkenau, usually as overseer of labour squads. Evacuated to Ravensbrück, she came to Belsen in early March 1945. At her trial, she admitted to having whipped and beaten prisoners, but denied responsibility for any killings. When she was hanged, she was still only 22 years old. (IWM)** *Right:* **The pictures were taken in the exercise yard of the detention cells adjoining the Celle courthouse. The old courthouse and jail no longer exist today and the modern building of the Oberlandgericht court now occupies the site. (Tony Bethel)**

THE BELSEN TRIALS

Their burial work finished, all SS prisoners were transferred to the prison at Celle on April 29. That same day, No. 102 Control Section relieved No. 10 Garrison of its duties. On May 5, the Hungarian troops were relieved by a battalion (formed and armed by No. 10 Garrison) of 850 released Russian PoWs, who guarded the area until May 15 when they were repatriated.

The first Belsen trial was held at Lüneburg between September 17 and November 17, 1945. In all, 45 men and women were indicted: Josef Kramer, by now brandished the world over as 'The Beast of Belsen', and 32 other SS, 16 of them women, plus 12 former Kapos, five of them women. The defendants stood accused for actions both at Auschwitz, where most of them had also served, and at Belsen, being charged with responsibility for ill treatment and death of prisoners.

The films and pictures of Belsen released before the trial had generated unqualified calls for 'revenge' on the Germans in general and the SS perpetrators in particular. Being the first 'camp trial', it received worldwide publicity but, unlike Nuremberg, the Belsen trial was a British affair, not an Allied one. The court was a British Military Court. Each of the accused was defended by a British barrister (four of the Polish Kapos by a Polish one), and given every opportunity to rebut the charges in the classical manner of British justice. Chairman of the Court was Major-General H. P. M. Berney-Ficklin. Judge-Advocate was L. C. Stirling, Chief Prosecutor Colonel P. M. Backhouse.

In all, the court sat for 54 working days. On the fourth day, September 20, a compilation of the footage filmed by the AFPU was shown. The court heard numerous witnesses, including Brigadier Glyn Hughes and Dr Hadassa Bimko for the prosecution. Much legal debate was spent on the question of state versus individual responsibility, and that of 'superior orders' — a line of defence that was to become typical for all war crime trials. Kramer and ten others — including three women: SS-Aufseherinnen (wardresses) Irma Grese, Elisabeth Volkenrath and Juana Bormann — were convicted and sentenced to death by hanging. Nineteen others received terms of imprisonment: of the SS, three got 15 years, five got 10, one 5, one 3 and one 1 year; of the Kapos, one got life (he was hanged for another crime in November 1945), two got 15 years, four got 10 and one 5 years. In four cases, no verdict was given because the accused fell ill before or during the trial. The remaining 14 were acquitted. Appeals for clemency were rejected and the 11 death sentences were carried out at Hameln jail on Friday, December 13, 1945, the British official executioner, Albert Pierrepoint, having been flown over to carry out the hangings.

At a second Belsen trial before a British Military Court, held in May-June 1946 at Celle and Lüneburg, another four men received a death sentence, and two men and three women prison sentences from 2 to 20 years. At a third, at Hamburg in April 1948, one other man received life.

By 1955, all those sent to jail at the Belsen trials had been released.

The SS personnel and Kapos arrested at Belsen were tried by British Military Courts in three separate Belsen trials. *Left:* **At the first and largest, held at the MTV-Halle, the local men's gymnasium, at Lüneburg, 45 people stood accused, 24 men and 21 women.** *Right:* **Major-General H. P. M. Berney-Ficklin, president of the court. (IWM)**

Kramer and Grese and nine others were sentenced to death and hanged at Hameln jail on Friday, December 13, 1945. First buried in the cemetery yard, they were transferred to plot C-III of the municipal cemetery 'Am Wehl' at Hameln in March 1954. Here, a total of 196 people executed by the British between 1945 and 1949 were buried. *Left:* **This is how it looked in 1985. (Stadtverwaltung Hameln)** *Right:* **After demonstrations by neo-Nazis and counter-demonstrations had led to violence in the cemetery grounds in November 1985, the plot was levelled off in March 1988, all grave markers being removed. Thus, like the victims they helped to murder, today Kramer and his crew lie mouldering in unnamed graves.**

The Wehrmacht barracks used for the relief of the horror camp remained a Displaced Persons camp — in fact, it became the largest DP camp for Jews in Germany — until 1950. It then reverted to its original use as the military barracks for the surrounding tank training area, becoming NATO Camp Hohne.

In late 1945, the British Military Government decided to make the former concentration camp into a memorial site. Parts of it, notably the old SS compound and some other stone buildings, were still in use as part of the DP camp, but the rest of the area was cleared. What still stood — fences, watchtowers and the crematorium — were pulled down and the foundations of the huts that had been burned were removed. The mass graves were landscaped into mounds, and plans drawn up for an international monument to be erected nearby.

In April 1946, a permanent Jewish memorial was unveiled. The International Memorial, consisting of an obelisk and a curved wall with inscriptions in 14 languages, was dedicated on November 30, 1952. The same year, responsibility for the memorial site was handed over to the Lower Saxony authorities.

In 1955, the last occupants — German refugees — evacuated the former SS compound and all buildings there were subsequently demolished too. In 1959-61, the authorities of Lower-Saxony constructed a new entrance to the memorial, about one kilometre south of the original gate, and in 1966, an exhibition and documentation centre was opened next to it. (This was enlarged and reorganised in 1985-90.)

Over the years, although the area around the mass graves and the memorials was well kept, the rest of the former camp grounds was allowed to disappear under newly-sprung woods of fir trees and silver birches. Nearly half the area of the camp, and all of the SS compound, lie in fact outside the fence of the present-day memorial site. The location of the camp gate of 1945 is today just an obscure track leading into the woods. In 1991, a project was started to uncover the remains of the camp hidden under the trees. Since then, volunteers from German youth organisations and school classes have laid bare the foundations of two of the stone huts (Nos. 9 and 10), uncovered two of the camp's cisterns (no trace of the other two remains), and unearthed lengths of camp road gutters in the Large Women's Camp and parts of the Lagerstrasse, the main camp road.

I have just returned from the Belsen concentration camp where for two hours I drove slowly about the place in a Jeep with the chief doctor of Second Army. I had waited a day before going to the camp so that I could be absolutely sure of the facts now available. I find it hard to describe adequately the horrible things I have seen and heard today, but here, unadorned, are the facts. There are 40,000 men, women and children in the camp. German and half a dozen other nationalities, thousands of them Jews. Of this total of 40,000, 4,250 are acutely ill or dying of virulent disease. Typhus, typhoid, diphtheria, dysentery, pneumonia, and childbirth fever are rife. 25,600, three quarters of them women, are either ill through lack of food or are actually dying of starvation. In the last few months alone, 30,000 prisoners have been killed off or allowed to die. Those are the simple, horrible facts of Belsen, but horrible as they are, they can convey little or nothing in themselves. I wish with all my heart that everyone fighting in this war, and above all those whose duty it is to direct the war from Britain and America, could have come with me this afternoon through the barbed-wire fence that leads to the inner compound of the camp. . . . Beyond the barrier was a swirling cloud of dust, the dust of thousands of slowly moving people, laden in itself with the deadly typhus germ. And with the dust was the smell, sickly and thick — the smell of death and decay, of corruption and filth.

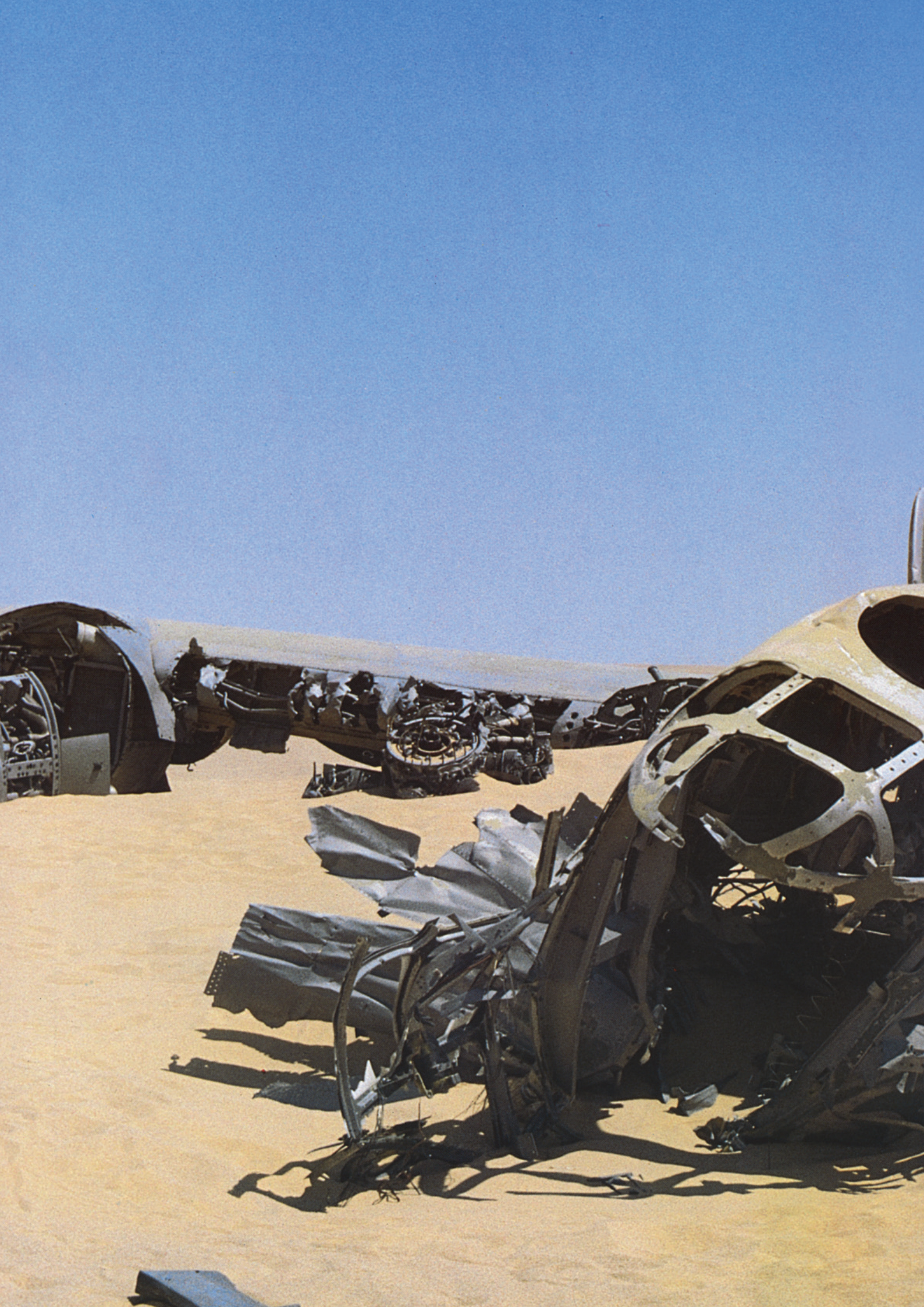
I passed through the barrier and found myself in the world of a nightmare. Dead bodies, some of them in decay, lay strewn about the road and along the rutted track. On each side of the road were brown wooden huts. There were faces at the windows, the bony emaciated faces of starving women, too weak to come outside, propping themselves against the glass to see the daylight before they died. . . . I saw a man, wandering dazedly along the road, stagger and fall. Someone else looked down at him, took him by the heels and dragged him to the side of the road to join the other bodies lying unburied there. No-one else took the slightest notice — they didn't even trouble to turn their heads. Behind the huts, two youths and two girls who had found a morsel of food were sitting together on the grass in picnic fashion, sharing it. They were not six feet from a pile of decomposing bodies.

RICHARD DIMBLEBY,
BBC RADIO BROADCAST, APRIL 19, 1945

Richard Dimbleby beside the Jewish Memorial in April 1965.

When you come back after 20 years, you find the Belsen concentration camp almost, though not entirely, unrecognisable. Gone are the huts and the compounds and the barbed wire and the poor emaciated, tottering people that were staggering about and the SS guards, men and women — they've all disappeared. The furnace where they hit them on the head and pushed them in the fire: all this has gone. And on a day like this, cold and rainy, such a contrast to the spring day on which I came here 20 years ago, there's nothing here but the desolation of heathland. All that you really find to remind you of this place, other than perhaps the lay-out of it, which I can remember as I stand here now, are graves.

RICHARD DIMBLEBY,
BBC TELEVISION BROADCAST, APRIL 1965



THE RETURN OF *LADY BE GOOD*

By Dr Fadel Ali Mohamed

The *Lady Be Good*, a Consolidated B-24 Liberator, belonged to the 514th Squadron of the American Ninth Air Force's 376th Bomb Group, based at Soluch, south of Benghazi. On April 4, 1943, she was to take part in a raid on Naples harbour, her nine-man crew on this occasion being 1st Lieutenant William J. Hatton, pilot; Lieutenant Robert F. Toner, co-pilot; 2nd Lieutenant Dp Hays, navigator; 2nd Lieutenant John S. Woravka, bomb aimer; Sergeant Harold J. Ripslinger, flight engineer; Sergeant Robert E. LaMotte, radio-operator/gunner; Sergeant Guy E. Shelley, Sergeant Samuel E. Adams and Sergeant Vernon Moore, all gunners. (See also *After the Battle* No. 25.)

As the 25 aircraft took off at 1315 hours, a sandstorm caused problems with all their engines. The *Lady Be Good* was in the second wave of 13, nine of which had to turn back with engine trouble, and the final four, including *Lady Be Good*, which suffered damage to an engine 30 minutes before her expected arrival at Naples, also had to abort the mission and head back for Libya, jettisoning its bombs on the way.

Due to a combination of circumstances — the engine trouble; the cloud cover concealing the coastline; and the fact that the wind had swung round 180 degrees and was now driving behind them — the crew of *Lady Be Good* were unaware that they had overshot the radio direction finder at Benina. The Benina operator received a call from the machine at 0012 hours on April 5, requesting a bearing, which was acknowledged by the crew. However, the Benina operator assumed that the aircraft was approaching the airfield, whereas she had already passed, and was on her way south towards the desert.

The *Lady Be Good* eventually ran out of fuel, and her crew donned parachutes and jumped from the plane, landing in the Libyan Desert about 450 miles south of Benghazi. The aircraft, which would have provided them with shelter from the burning daytime sun, drifted on for some ten miles before coming down south of the great Sand Sea of Calanshio, 180 miles from Sarir Oilfield. Lieutenant Woravka's parachute failed to open, but the other eight men were re-united and set off northwards to try to walk out of the desert — a desperate struggle which was recorded in the diaries of Robert Toner and Harold Ripslinger which were found later. The eight had only a little water and food, and their parachutes for shelter. They abandoned anything they could along the way, leaving a trail which might be a signal to rescuers from the air, but every day the blazing, cloudless sky remained empty.

By April 9, they had walked 65 miles under the merciless sun, by which time five of them — Hatton, Hays, Toner, Adams and LaMotte — had no strength to continue. The last entry in Toner's diary was dated Monday, April 12, and states: 'No help yet, very cold night.' Ripslinger managed to cover nearly 20 more miles, his last diary entry being on Palm Sunday, April 11, and Shelley a further seven miles, but in that empty, hostile environment so far from habitation, there was no hope for any of them.

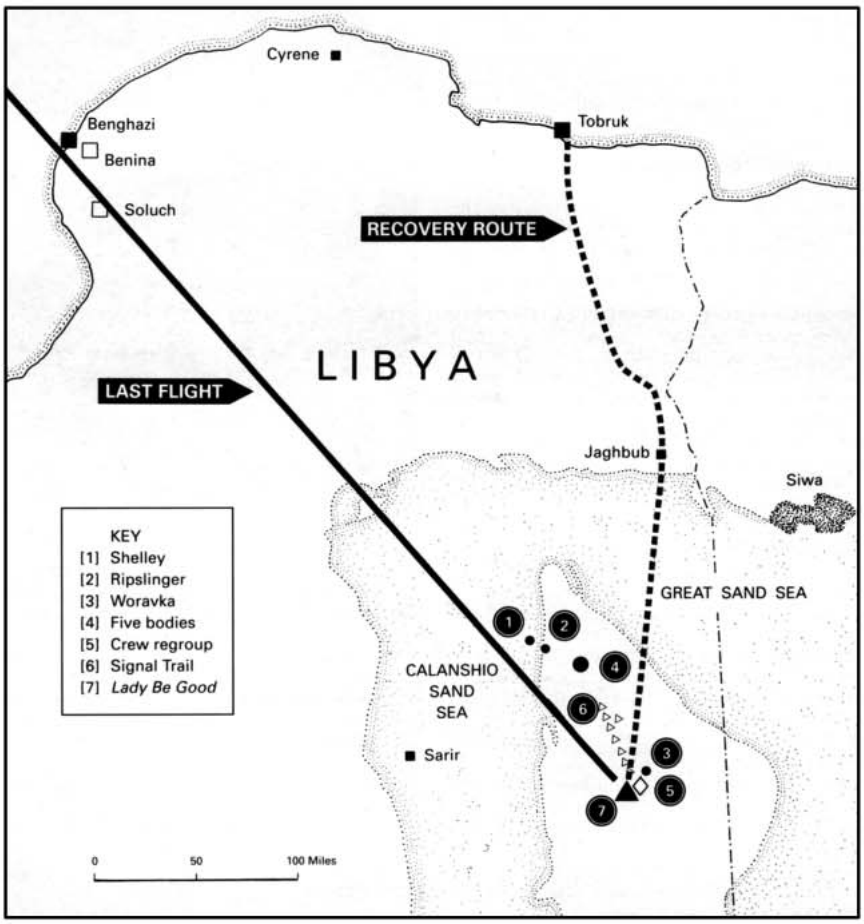
The *Lady Be Good* was first spotted from the air by a prospecting team of British geologists, Ronald MacLean and S. V. Sykes, from D'Arcy Exploration Company, later part of British Petroleum, on November 9, 1958. The position of the aircraft was plotted as a useful landmark. The fuselage was entered the following February by D. Sheridan and A. Martin, geologists, and Gordon Bowerman, a surveyor. Among the objects seen were the Navigator's Log with entries for April 4, 1943, the Pilot's Flight Log, the Maintenance Inspection Record, supplies of several kinds, a flask of coffee and packets of cigarettes and chewing gum.

The US Army instigated an exhaustive three-month search during the summer of 1959 to trace the crew, but without success, the bodies of the group of five being eventually found in February 1960 by a BP exploration team. Those of Ripslinger and Shelley were discovered later. The remains of John Woravka were found, again by BP, in August 1960, but the body of Vernon Moore has never been found to this day. The other eight bodies were taken by the USAF from their base at Wheelus Field, Tripoli, to America.

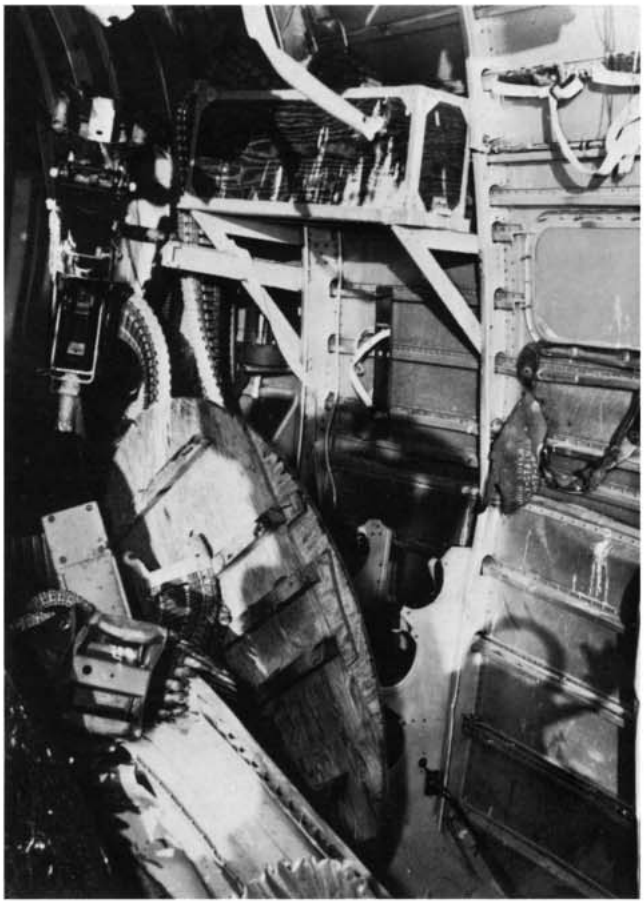
After lying in the Libyan desert for over 15 years, the *Lady Be Good* was first spotted in November 1958 and reached by geologists in February 1959. These pictures were taken by an official US photographer the following year.

The *Lady Be Good* rested alone in the vast empty desert for 51 years, used as a landmark for aviators and as a shelter for birds of passage. However, in 1994 the decision was taken to move the plane, for two reasons. Firstly, the hobby of catching hawks for sale is taking Libyans further and further into the desert, where the *Lady Be Good* provided shelter but was thus vulnerable to possible damage by visitors of many nationalities if left in situ. Secondly, her proximity to the Libyan/Egyptian border posed the risk that she might be broken up and taken to Egypt or any other country. This possibility was demonstrated by the fact that small pieces from the seats, wires and other articles had already been found some six miles to the east.

It was therefore decided to remove the plane for protection and display at Tobruk (see *After the Battle* No. 51), in the proposed International Military Museum. Due to its strategic position as a port, Tobruk was the hub of the conflict in North Africa during the Second World War and it is now the final resting place for 60,000 local civilian and service personnel of all nationalities. The underground headquarters and shelter used both by Rommel and Montgomery have been found, occupying a T-shaped area 200 by 100 metres, and this will form the basis of the new museum. It is built of reinforced concrete and consists of seven small rooms connected by a passage, with the remaining area used as an operations room panelled in wood for the display of maps, and containing when it was found a large table covered with sand, obviously once used for planning military movements. Each room has a window by the ceiling, letting the maximum light through to the operations room. At the corners of the complex are four towers, one of them two-storied, comprising small pillboxes for guns. Also found in connection with the building was a 40-ton gun made by the Italian manufacturer Terni, with the date 1917, the mounting being set in concrete, together with weapons, British and German helmets, and German tank boots. The headquarters had been covered by a single-storey building used as a school.



The *Lady Be Good* will be displayed outside, but for the present she is secure in the military garrison in the town.



Left: **Absolutely intact when first found, since then the *Lady Be Good* has been plundered for souvenirs.** *Above:* **One of the earliest displays, which included one of the engines, the front wheel, a cannon, aileron and other components stripped from the wreck, was mounted at the USAF Museum at the Wright-Patterson AFB in Ohio. Official visits to the wreckage ceased in 1970 when the USAF and RAF were forced to quit their bases in Libya, but later visitors have taken further items, leading Dr Fadel Ali of the Antiquities Department at Cyrene to mount his operation to rescue what still remains.**

The 700km journey to retrieve the wreckage was mounted from August 1–10, 1994, under the control of the Antiquities Department at Cyrene. I travelled by air from Benghazi to Sarir airfield, then drove out, with a special desert guide in a second car, to the plane to locate its precise position; to see what would be needed; and to work out a plan of campaign. This stage took two days. The Gulf Petrol Company provided three huge trucks for transporting the remains, together with a crane and a special machine for clearing sand by suction.

The group which carried out the operation consisted of Idris Erfadi from the Tobruk Office of Archaeology; Moktar Essahli from Gulf Petrol Company; three drivers, Goma O. Hamed, Imrajeh A. Ehmaida and Essaber H. Shoaeb; myself, Dr. Fadel Ali Mohamed, Controller of Antiquities, Cyrene, responsible for the mission; and the most vital person of all, our guide, Salem Rafeh.

The three trucks travelled side by side with my Land Cruiser in front equipped with a radio having a range of 3,000km. Because our route lay through enormous dunes which shift every few days, the guide in his Land Rover travelled 60 miles ahead, in order to check the route. Every 20 to 30 miles, if everything was satisfactory, he would drive in a figure-of-eight so that the other drivers would see this mark and know it was safe to follow his tracks. It would not be easy for the three big vehicles to negotiate a sudden deviation and, if one of these monsters did become stuck in the sand, the air had to be let out of the tyres, the vehicle freed, and the tyres re-inflated. We carried as much water as possible, the most precious commodity in temperatures of 45 to 50 degrees Centigrade; 1,000 litres of diesel fuel and three barrels of petrol. I took two lambs, and so did the guide, one hung on either side of our vehicles and, in spite of the intense heat, the meat stayed good, because of the absence of any insects in that barren area.

The group travelled mostly at night because it was cool, and the sand was firmer. We drove without the aid of any compass as we had no need of it. Our guide was a good one who knew this vast area and could navigate by Jedi, the Pole Star, and could also tell our position by smelling a handful of sand.

In the morning, Salem Rafeh would wait for the rest of the group to catch up, and we would meet for breakfast at about 10 a.m. Afterwards, we would carry on as before, and join up again for lunch at about 2 p.m. Everyone would lie in the shade under the vehicles until 4 p.m., then continue until 6 p.m. when we stopped for tea — in the desert the most wonderful drink imaginable. Refreshed, we would continue until 11 p.m. and find the guide with a meal prepared. Sometimes he had found pieces of wood along the route, and we would light a fire. Everyone slept in the sand under the stars until 5 a.m. when it was again time to leave.

When we reached the *Lady Be Good*, the accumulated sand had to be cleared away from the interior and exterior, which took us four days. The plane was already broken into three pieces: the cabin section, which was the most damaged; the central wing section with the remaining engines (37 metres from wingtip to wingtip), and the tail section.

Equipment was provided by Gulf including three Kenworth 6×6 oilfield trucks to carry out the recovery in August 1994, led by Dr Fadel Ali who would travel by Toyota Land Cruiser.

A good illustration of the vandalism the Liberator had suffered over the intervening years is illustrated in this view of the cabin section, pictured *(left)* as first found and *(right)* as recovered 35 years later.

The wreckage, partially covered with an accumulation of sand, as photographed by Dr Fadel Ali on his arrival. His *Lady Be Good* recovery is just one of a series of investigations carried out into wartime events in Libya and he has already located an Italian fighter shot down in January 1929 during the Battle of Kufra (against Italy, which had held nominal control of Libya since 1912). Two further French aircraft wrecks are also under review for recovery.

Fortuitously, the rear fuselage had been severed in the unmanned crash landing in 1943, so the loading of this section was relatively easy, the only protester being a solitary eagle which had nested in the tail.

It was found that all the instruments were now missing, also the radio and propellers. A portion had been cut from the port wing, probably bearing the aircraft number, 41-24301. The landing gear was still retracted inside the plane. One wheel was complete, but the other had suffered at the hands of a souvenir hunter who had cut out a square of rubber with a sharp knife. Several contemporary scraps of paper were found, some probably from a flyer's handbook, and also two tags tied together, still smelling strongly of lubricating oil, which seem to record the date of the *Lady Be Good*'s next intended service. Rather surprisingly, in view of all the missing equipment, two guns still remain fore and aft, with cannon shells bearing the date 1942. The cartridges inside the aircraft were in good condition, but those outside had exploded in the heat. Some military issue tins, for evaporated milk, sugar and margarine, all opened, were found in the sand outside the plane, but these were probably left in 1959 by an investigating group which camped at the site for two days.

Many dead birds were found inside the wings, completely dried out, and a pair of eagles had made a nest in the tail, containing one egg. When we loaded this portion on to the truck, the eagle circled round and tried to prevent us. The other two portions were loaded, the wing section overlapping the front and rear of its truck. Just at the last moment, an exhausted hoopoe flew in looking for shelter. It had obviously passed that way before, as it found the pool of shade under the wings, although that section was now loaded on a truck. We gave it water and some food, but unfortunately had to leave it to its fate.

The expedition headed northward, leaving a memorial at the site, stating: 'The monument of *Lady Be Good*, which fell in this desert on 5th April 1943 and has been taken by the Department of Antiquities, Cyrene, to the Military Museum of Tobruk on 1st August 1994.' This memorial, which has a model of a Liberator on top, will in its turn provide shelter and a point of reference for all the migrating birds which fly over that area.

Subsequent research has revealed the fate of certain parts of the aircraft. The radio was removed in May 1959 by the first search crew to land at the site. The armrests to the pilots' seats were taken for re-use on a courier plane which operated between Benghazi and Tripoli. Some parts were taken for examination by the US Air Force Aeronautical Systems Division: the hydraulic actuators for the landing gear and landing-flap systems, the tail-gun turret-drive mechanism, a gun charger, hydraulic pumps, pressure accumulators and the radio-compass.

A propeller and a .50-calibre machine gun, the nose wheel and tyre are now at the Air Force Museum at the Wright-Patterson Air Force Base at Dayton, Ohio. Another propeller was acquired by BP; the third is at the US Air Force Academy, and the fourth forms a memorial in the home town of Robert LaMotte.

In April 1968, the number two engine was removed with its cowling by the RAF for examination in America, where unexpectedly a fragment of enemy cannon projectile was found within it — presumably causing the initial engine trouble which had contributed to the whole scenario.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks are due to the Gulf Petrol Company for all their help with staff, transportation and equipment, from helmets down to safety boots, and to Mrs Dorothy Thorn for help with the preparation of this article in English.

Loaded ready for departure. The *Lady Be Good* is currently stored in the military barracks at Tobruk, where, unfortunately, photography was not possible, to await the establishment of the new museum based around Rommel's HQ. Dr Fadel Ali says that 'the journey was undertaken because Libya respects international history, and the *Lady Be Good* is part of that history, as well as being part of the history of Libya'.

A CHARIOTEER IS NO LONGER MISSING

Sub-Lieutenant Gregor Riggs and Sergeant Colin Cameron were two of 24 men engaged on Operation 'Rimau' (Rimau being the Malaysian for 'Tiger') which was a joint British-Australian special forces operation to sink Japanese shipping in Singapore's Keppel Harbour. Like its predecessor, Operation 'Jaywick', 'Rimau' was mounted from Australia and commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel Ivan Lyon of the Gordon Highlanders, who had served with the 2nd Battalion in Singapore before its fall, escaping to join the Services Reconnaissance Department (SRD) — the Australian equivalent of the Special Operations Executive.

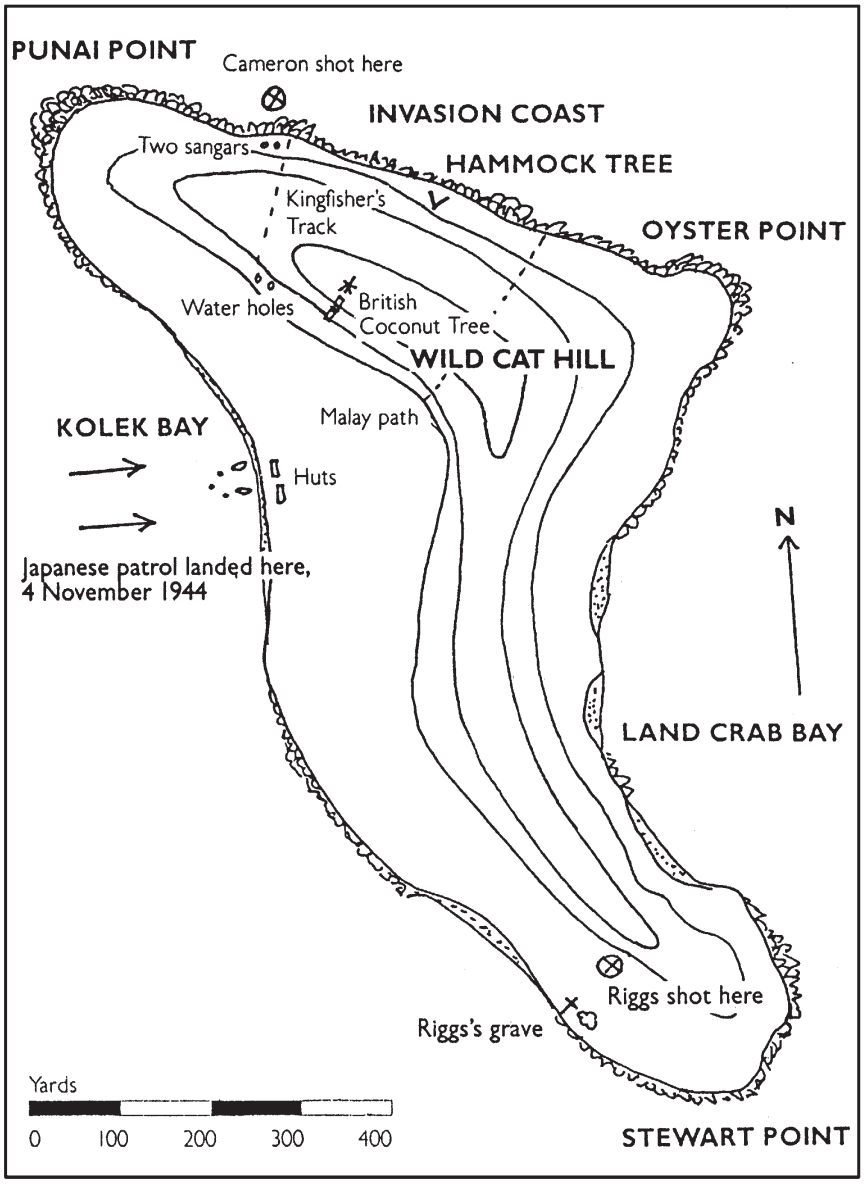
The name 'Jaywick' was chosen by Lyon from the trade name of a toilet disinfectant because he wanted the operation to remove the 'pong of the Japs from Singapore'. Mounted in August 1943, seven ships were attacked in Singapore Harbour, of which two were sunk and five damaged.

Operation 'Rimau' (the tiger motif came from a tattoo on Lieutenant-Colonel Lyon's chest) was planned with the hope of the same results as its predecessor, but it turned into a sequence of mishaps and disasters which resulted in the death of every man involved. The subsequent mystery as to precisely what did go wrong has led to at least two books which revealed part of the story, an Australian film starring Jason Donovan and, finally, the definitive account of the operation, *The Heroes of Rimau* by Lynette Ramsay Silver based on detailed research by a retired Australian commando, Major Tom Hall.

On September 11, 1944, the SRD unit left Careening Bay on the west coast of Australia in the submarine HMS *Porpoise*, arriving at the Riauw archipelago, south of Singapore. Included in the team was Sub-Lieutenant James Gregor MacIntosh Riggs (RNVR) who, at 20 years of age, was the chief test pilot for the project developing the 'Motor Submersible Canoe', more commonly known as the 'Sleeping Beauty' or SB. Another member was an Australian, Sergeant Colin Barclay Cameron, aged 21, included in the team for his technical abilities.

Major Tom Hall *(above)*, **a former teacher and member of the Australian armed forces for 28 years, first became interested in the story of Operation 'Rimau' in 1958 while serving as a young lieutenant in the commandos.** *Top:* **In 1981, he took this photograph as he approached Merapas Island (some 80 miles south-east of Singapore) for the first time. This was where members of the joint British-Australian special forces operation had been hunted down by the Japanese and where the remains of Sergeant Colin Cameron had been found in 1976. Major Hall crouches in the stone sangar where Sergeant Cameron fought his last battle in November 1944, and where his skull was picked up by an islander 32 years later. The sangar lies beyond the tall trees on the left-hand side of the island in the top photo and the bow of the boat points to the spot where Sub-Lieutenant Gregor Riggs was found in 1994.**

Operation 'Rimau' was mounted by the Services Reconnaissance Department (SRD) in Australia to attack shipping in Singapore Harbour. Merapas Island was to be the SRD base and RV for the subsequent pick-up by submarine. A junk, the *Mustika*, was shanghaied to provide suitable transport and, disguised as locals, the SRD party was sailing up the western side of the island when they were intercepted by a patrol boat of the 'Hei Ho' — collaborators set up by the Japanese to police local fishing boats. However, to the SRD they appeared to be conventional members of the Imperial Japanese Army. What happened next is not entirely clear, but someone opened fire, whereupon the Hei Ho crew were gunned down. With secrecy compromised, in the confusion which followed, not helped by a blinding rainstorm, 12 men made for the nearby shore while Lieutenant-Colonel Lyon ordered the *Mustika* to be scuttled. He then led four men in their one-man submersibles to continue with the attack. Meanwhile, those ashore prepared to wait for the submarine, being joined later by some of the others. It was at that point that the Japanese set out to search the island.



Once released from the submarine, the unit needed inconspicuous transport. With little objection from its crew, they pirated a Malaysian junk which was used to transport their equipment and one-man submersible boats. Whilst still amongst the islands of the Riauw archipelago, the junk and its Caucasian crew were spotted by a patrol boat of Indonesian auxiliaries, called 'Hei Ho', who worked for the Japanese controlling the local population. As their boat approached to make a closer examination, shots rang out and the whole operation was instantly compromised. Although most of the Hei Ho, who wore Japanese uniforms, were killed, a survivor managed to escape to Sambo Island. There he informed the Japanese, being paid for the information, and the search for the men of 'Rimau' began. However, Lyon did not abandon the whole operation at this stage and succeeded in blowing up three more Japanese ships as his men made their way to Merapas Island for the rendezvous with their submarine, HMS *Tantalus*. However, contrary to its orders and although being within 40 miles of the island, the submarine failed to make the rendezvous while searching for targets of opportunity. She finally arrived two weeks too late.

Now alerted to the presence of the commandos, the Japanese proceeded to hunt down the 'Rimau' force with a vengeance. On November 4, they were discovered by a large enemy force and, apart from Riggs and Cameron who had become separated by hiding further inland during the night, the men paddled away to a nearby island. Now it appears that Riggs and Cameron were actually covering the escape of their comrades.

By dawn, the two men had discovered a crude stone sangar, which had been built with rocks carried from the beach. Having no means of escape and armed only with pistols, they were in a desperate situation. Engaging the Japanese from the stone emplacement on the western side of the island, Sergeant Cameron was soon shot dead. Sub-Lieutenant Riggs ran to the eastern end of the island, drawing the Japanese after him. An eyewitness of the grim climax to the skirmish was Abdul Achap, a 24-year-old local lad. He recalled that Riggs reached the end of the island, when he turned about and, firing his revolver, squared up to the enemy. He was shot in the chest and fell down a slope, finishing up against a large rock. Achap ran to him and gathered him into his arms and, in his words: 'He looked at me, prayed to his gods, and died'. He indicated that Riggs had made the sign of the Cross.

Abdul Achap, a 24-year-old employee of the harbour-master on nearby Mapor Island, was impressed by the Japanese to guide them on Merapas. Here, in 1989, he shows Tom Hall how Sub-Lieutenant Riggs died alongside the large rock he came to rest against when he was shot and fell down the hill.

Tom Hall: 'I returned to Merapas Island on June 2, 1989 having traced Abdul Achap. I asked him to place the Australian flag on the exact spot where he had buried Riggs. Using the large tree in the background as a reference, and looking over his shoulder at the large rock, he paced out the distance and went straight to the spot. Although I didn't realise it at the time, had Riggs lived, the day we pinpointed his unmarked grave would have been his 65th birthday.'

Because the heroic stand that Riggs made had impressed the Japanese, Achap was allowed to bury his body and mark the grave with a cross. Meanwhile, Cameron lay unburied where he fell on the other side of the island, his remains not being discovered until long after the war.

Ultimately, the last stand by Gregor Riggs and Colin Cameron merely prolonged the ultimate fate of the other 'Rimau' commandos. Sixteen remained at large on the island, while six escaped in native canoes, only to be killed or captured. Two of the wounded, Lieutenant-Commander D. M. N. Davidson, RNVR, and Corporal A. G. P. Campbell, AIF, unable to withdraw to Merapas Island, took their own lives with cyanide pills on Tapai Island, thus preventing any possibility of the planned rendezvous on November 7 being compromised. Eventually the remainder, after months of captivity in Singapore as prisoners-of-war, were beheaded by the Japanese in July 1945, shortly before the Japanese surrender.

For over 30 years, the story of Operation 'Rimau' and its tragic climax had been researched by Major Tom Hall. During his investigations in 1981, he visited Merapas Island and met Karta, a local inhabitant who, as a young boy, had been befriended by a member of 'Rimau'. Karta handed Hall a plastic bag containing a human skull which he had discovered near a stone sangar in 1976 and had kept beneath his bed ever since. Hall purchased the skull and, after being arrested by the Indonesian marine police, had to cope with the inevitable red tape of the Sydney Airport customs hall. Its positive identification took another eight years because Tom had to eliminate five of the commandos who were unaccounted for. Finally, using advanced technology, forensic scientists confirmed Tom Hall's belief that it was, indeed, part of the mortal remains of Sergeant Cameron. During a later visit in 1989, Hall managed to locate Abdul Achap, the man who had buried Riggs 45 years before.

Tom Hall had kept the Commonwealth War Graves Commission informed of his investigations, and in 1992 the graves of Lieutenant Commander Donald Davidson and Corporal Archie Campbell in Kranji War Cemetery received new, named headstones, their graves being originally commemorated as those of unknown soldiers.

At the conclusion of his detailed research, he contacted the Royal Navy in Britain giving details of the location of the grave of Gregor Riggs. The Defence Attaché at the British Embassy in Jakarta was asked to investigate the matter and, in February 1994, the Chief-of-Staff of the Indonesian Armed Forces, General Mantiri, told Admiral Sir Jock Slater, the United Kingdom Vice-Chief of Defence Staff, that the search for the body could go ahead.

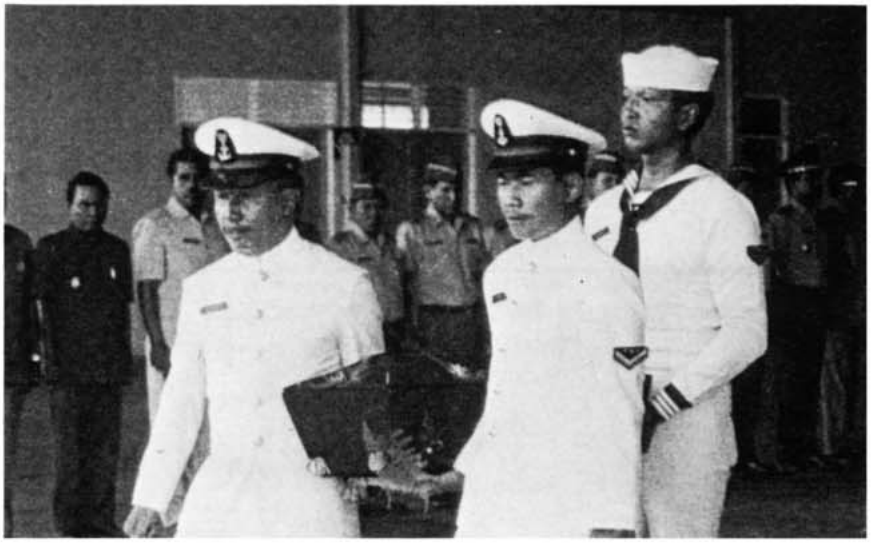
With much assistance from the British High Commission in Singapore, the offer of a boat by the chairman of Singapore Tobacco, and the detailed knowledge of Abdul Achap, Lynette Silver and Tom Hall, the remains of Sub-Lieutenant Riggs were discovered four months later — at precisely 11 a.m. on June 1. The remains were handed over by the Commodore of the Indonesian naval base at Tanjungpinang to Colonel Antonius Suwarno, the head of the Indonesian Armed Forces Foreign Liaison Staff. The casket was flown by the Indonesian Fleet Air Arm to Jakarta where it was placed in a coffin draped with the Union Flag. At 9 a.m. on June 3, General Mantiri handed over the remains to Charles Gray, the Deputy Head of Mission of the British Embassy in Jakarta, prior to its transfer to Singapore. Also flown to Singapore was the skull of Sergeant Cameron which was also to be buried at the same ceremony.

'Almost five years to the day I took that photograph, we dug up the remains of Sub-Lieutenant Riggs from that exact spot.'

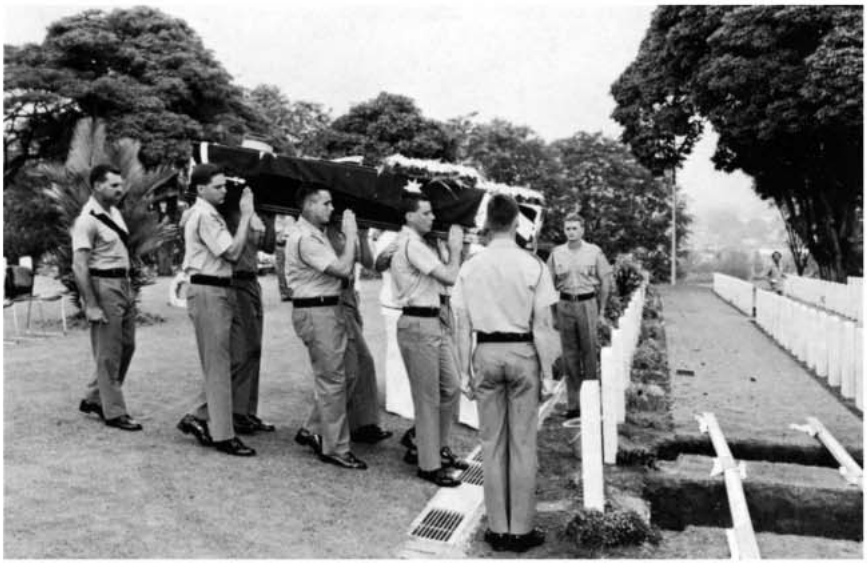
The remains are handed over by representatives of the Indonesian Army at Tanjungpinang to be flown to Singapore for burial in Kranji War Cemetery.

On August 27, 1994, a funeral with full military honours was held at Kranji War Cemetery, Singapore, where the other members of Operation 'Rimau' are buried. Pall-bearers, honour guard and firing party were supplied by contingents from HMS *Cardiff* and the Royal Australian Regiment.

Members of the families of both Gregor Riggs and Colin Cameron were flown to Singapore from the UK and Australia. Also present was Abdul Achap, the very person who had buried Riggs almost 50 years before.



At Kranji, Sub-Lieutenant Riggs' coffin, covered with the Union Flag, was borne by a Royal Navy bearer party from HMS *Cardiff*, while Sergeant Cameron's, covered by the Australian flag, by men of the Royal Australian Regiment.



Having already achieved the naming of two unknown graves at Kranji, a fitting end for two more heroes of 'Rimau' — all thanks to the tireless efforts of Tom Hall.

Fifty years later, a moving moment also for Abdul Achap.

MANOD QUARRY AND NATIONAL GALLERY PAINTINGS

By Reg Chambers Jones

Plans for the dispersal of paintings from the National Gallery, the Royal collection at Hampton Court and other galleries, were formulated when war loomed on the horizon in the 1930s. Various sites had been considered for their safe-keeping but, taking advice from the Air Ministry, it was decided that the Principality of Wales should be comparatively safe from enemy bombing.

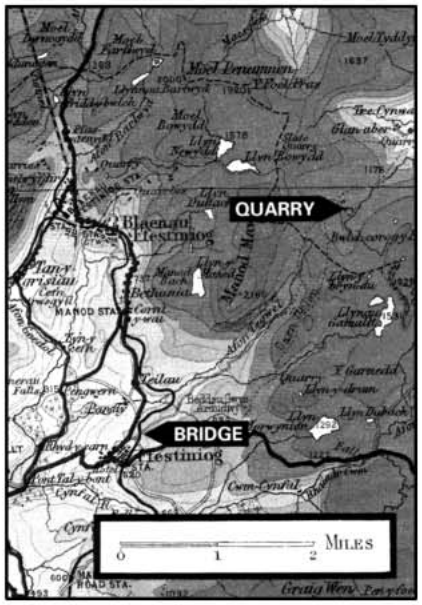
When it became apparent that all efforts at procuring peace had failed and war was inevitable, the operation of moving paintings and other artefacts of historical importance out of London was conducted between August 23 and September 2, 1939, in a well-rehearsed operation having the benefit of trials held 12 months earlier during the Munich crisis. Some of the smaller paintings from the National Gallery were taken to Bangor by the London Midland and Scottish Railway (LMSR), and others by the Great Western Railway (GWR) to Aberystwyth. Those destined for North Wales were shared between Penrhyn Castle, the University College of North Wales, Caernarfon Castle and a private house outside Caernarfon, whilst those at Aberystwyth in mid-Wales were housed mainly at the National Library of Wales.

Although the paintings had been afforded tentative protection from aerial attack at their new location, the unstable atmospheric conditions at some of the places where they were housed certainly was a problem. The fluctuating heat produced by a coke-fired central heating system at the Pritchard Jones Hall at the University in Bangor required extra vigilance as did the varying humidity of the garage at Penrhyn Castle where some of the larger paintings were stored.

With the possibility of an invasion from the Continent following on the evacuation of British expeditionary troops at Dunkirk, Samuel Courtauld, chairman of the Gallery Trustees, considered that the paintings in their various locations were vulnerable, and a safer haven would have to be found for them for the duration of the war where the atmospheric conditions could be more easily controlled. Various alternatives were looked at, including disused railway tunnels, caves and quarries, until the decision was eventually taken to use Manod quarry, 1,750 feet above sea level in the mountains surrounding the town of Ffestiniog in North Wales. The vast caverns, with overhead protection of 200–300 feet of rock, had been formed over many years by the extraction of slate.

Contracts relating to work in the quarry were signed in the autumn of 1940 and the first task undertaken by local quarrymen, supervised by Mr C. A. Vaughan, the quarry manager, was to increase the size of the entrance from 6ft by 6ft to 13ft 6ins by 10ft. This allowed vehicles to be driven inside the quarry and so be unloaded unobtrusively.

Over 200 miles from their usual home in the National Gallery on London's Trafalgar Square, Britain's art treasures spent the greater part of the Second World War in caverns at Manod, North Wales. *Top:* **The enlarged entrance in the mountainside pictured in November 1942.** *Above:* **Retained in Government ownership throughout the Cold War, its secrets were only revealed in September 1983 when the Cwt-y-Bugail Slate Quarrying Company, which leased the caverns, obtained a county court judgement ordering the Government to quit.**



Located just two miles east of Blaenau Ffestiniog, the approach road wound twice that distance up the valley from Ffestiniog to the Manod quarry.

After nine months of work at the quarry, the first paintings, packed in containers which were mounted on road vehicles for the 40-mile journey to Manod, arrived on August 12, 1941, delivered by LMSR which had been given the responsibility of moving the paintings stored at Bangor and Caernarfon. A similar arrangement was made with the GWR which had the task of bringing paintings stored at the National Library of Wales also to Manod, a distance of some 70 miles.

Three containers a day, six days a week, were arriving, giving the staff the task of dealing with between 600 and 700 paintings per week which was quite a task when it is considered that some of the paintings weighed nearly half a ton. After leaving the main road between Ffestiniog and Blaenau Ffestiniog, the lorries had to negotiate the three-mile, single track, mountain road with difficult gradients which required a great deal of driving skill on the part of the lorry drivers entrusted with such valuable cargo. Arrangements had to be made to ensure that no two lorries, one full ascending and another empty descending, met on such a narrow road. One painting in particular, Van Dyck's *Charles I on Horseback*, was so large that it was necessary for the road beneath the Ffestiniog railway bridge with its normal 11-foot clearance to be lowered by two and a half feet. The ¾-inch clearance so provided meant that it took half an hour to negotiate the bridge.

Left: **The Ffestiniog railway bridge was the main obstacle on the route and the road had to be lowered by 2ft 6ins to enable *Charles I on Horseback* to pass underneath. (National Gallery)**
Right: **The specially-constructed abutments remain to this day.**

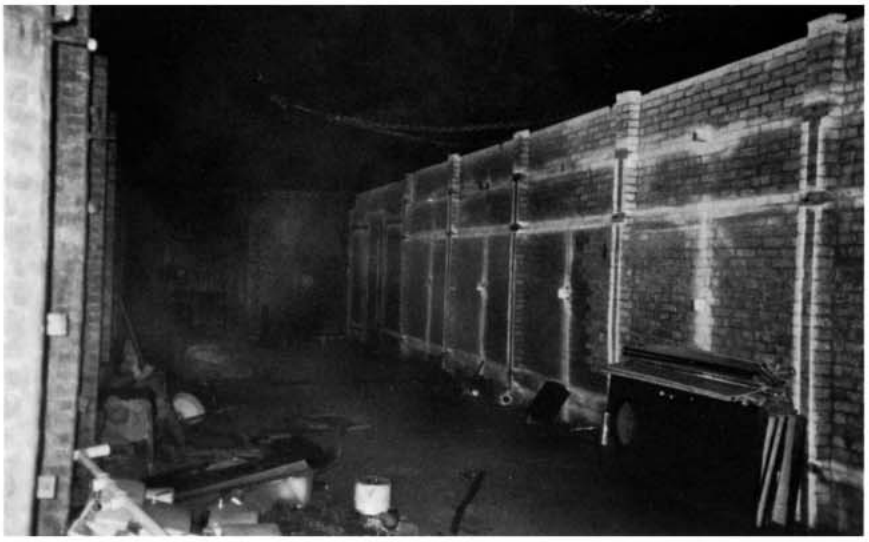
The Press Censorship Bureau passed this picture for publication on November 5, 1942, with the instructions to 'cut as indicated' and 'location must not be indicated from rock formations in strata'. However, even the censor did not know the true location as he added the pencilled note: 'Believed to be in Cheddar Gorge' which is 125 miles away in Somerset!

Initially, the six brick chambers erected within the caverns to house the paintings allowed the atmosphere to be controlled by plenum apparatus causing four air changes per hour conducted along ducts by fans, so inhibiting any growth of mould on the paintings. The atmosphere within the chambers was maintained at 65 degrees Fahrenheit with 42 per cent humidity. The artificial conditions introduced into the cavern ambience affected parts of the roof, causing occasional rock falls. Fortunately, no damage was incurred as far as the paintings were concerned due to such falls, but constant monitoring of the roof was necessary.

Because certain paint materials such as oil and tempera react to lack of light by turning yellow, a certain level of illumination had to be available at all times. Although electric power was supplied from the North Wales Power Company grid system and stepped down by transformers from 11,000 volts to 400 volts for heating, and 230 or 100 volts for lighting, a 150hp Crossley diesel engine with a 90k alternator was installed, since there was always the possibility of mains electricity failure especially during the winter months.

Left: **Mr G. Wilkinson operating the controls to the air purification and heating system designed to maintain a temperature of 65 degrees Fahrenheit (+ or – 2 degrees) — then considered a modern science for the preservation of art treasures.** *Right:* **Remains of the equipment, modified after the war as Manod was considered by the Government still to be a safe shelter in case of nuclear war. Speculation still exists as to whether Manod was the place where the Crown Jewels were taken for safe-keeping — to date one of the Second World War's best-kept secrets. Even Brigadier Kenneth Mears failed to solve the mystery when he was Deputy Governor of the Tower of London. He took up his appointment in 1980 after serving as Director of the Intelligence Corps but, after eight years delving, had to admit he had drawn a blank. 'My own opinion is that the King personally organised a friend of the Royal household, whose absolute discretion could be relied upon, to hide the jewels', said Brigadier Mears on his retirement in March 1989. 'Like all good secrets, it was never written down.' Only four people knew that secret; three have died and the identity of the fourth has never been disclosed.**

Above left: **Within the caverns, brick buildings had been erected to house the paintings in the controlled conditions.** *Above right:* **When they were moved outside for cleaning or restoration, the paintings were transported in a special box wagon.** *Below:* **The roofs have now been demolished, but the walls of the stores still remain.**



When all the paintings were safely stored within the chambers, the opportunity was taken during the next four or five years for each one to be checked and, when necessary, cleaned or restored by Bill Holder and Helmut Ruhemann in a daylight studio built near the entrance to the quarry.

Sir Kenneth Clark, as Director of the Gallery, together with Messrs Ian Rawlins and Martin Davies, were mainly responsible for the moving of the paintings to Wales and their safe keeping whilst in Wales, and they were assisted by 14 National Gallery staff within the quarry. Such a number was required since the place had to be guarded day and night. Further men were brought in when it was necessary to move the paintings from place to place.

During 1945, when the end of the war was thought to be not so far away, plans for the return journey of the paintings were prepared so that by the time hostilities ended a few were in position in the Gallery at Trafalgar Square. By the end of the year, all the paintings had been safely returned to London where they could once more be admired and appreciated. Manod quarry had served its purpose well. Had the paintings not been removed from London, many, if not all of them, would have been destroyed when the Gallery was badly damaged during the Blitz.

Amazingly, such was the control exercised over the atmosphere within the quarry that the condition of the paintings was better when they were returned in 1945 compared to the time when they left London in 1939. Inevitably, visitors to a gallery cause much fluctuation in temperature and humidity during the course of a day.

Government control over the Manod quarry was maintained for many years after the war, more especially during the 'Cold War' and at the time of the Cuban crisis, but eventually it was handed back to private ownership.

Nowadays, a visitor to the caverns would have great difficulty in believing that priceless paintings were once housed in the dark, dank and forbidding caverns. All the carefully planned and built brick buildings within the caverns have been partly destroyed, and artefacts necessary to maintain a perfect atmosphere have been removed or dismantled. The task set for Manod quarry was fulfilled: nature is now taking over again.

'Bless 'Em All — Aspects of the War in North West Wales 1939-45', by Reg Chambers Jones, is published by Bridge Books, 25a Chester Street, Wrexham, Clwyd, LL13 8BG.

Left: **Sir Kenneth Clark, left, the then-Director of the National Gallery, examines a Philip de Koninck with Bill Holder, of the family firm of picture restorers retained by the gallery, who worked throughout the war on the paintings.** *Above:* **The primitive restoration studio still stands in the quarry.**

THE INVASION OF SAIPAN

By D. Colt Denfeld

On October 14, 1914, the Japanese Imperial Navy sailed into Garapan Harbor, Saipan, to acquire another Micronesian island, concluding the accession of all the German possessions in the central Pacific. Left unchallenged was American Guam and the British Gilberts. It was an easy acquisition as the German Micronesian Islands were undefended, remote trading stations.

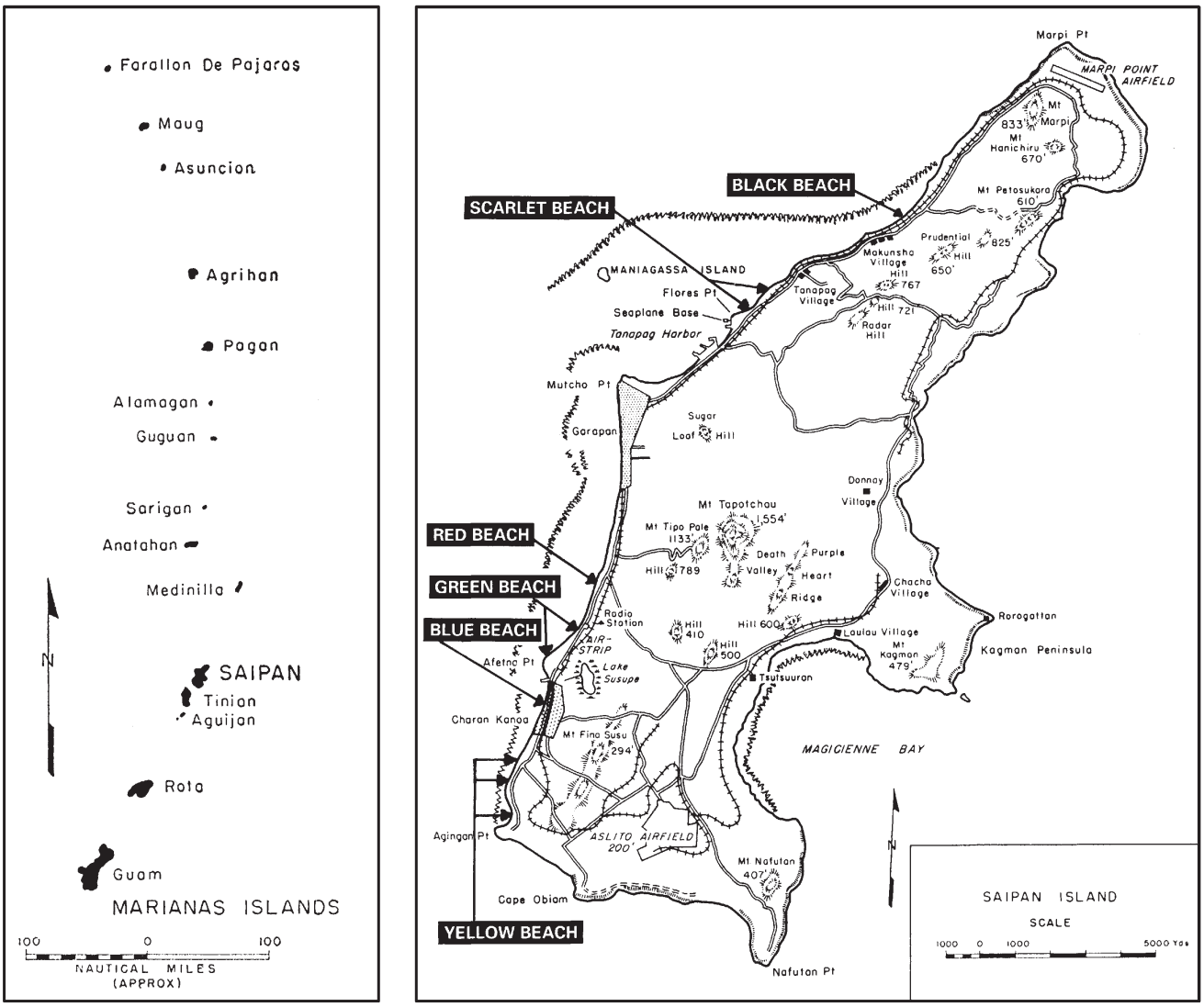
Following World War I, the League of Nations granted Japan a mandate to administer these islands, a mandate intended to foster economic growth, improvement in health and education. The mandate was for a civil administration, one prohibition being the fortification of the islands although, initially, the Japanese Navy was in charge.

To administer the islands with economic expansion as a major goal, a civilian administration was formed and sent to Micronesia in 1922. The Nanyo-cho (South Seas Bureau) was to integrate the islands into the Japanese economy. Studies were launched to determine what goods could be produced and exported. There were some initial failures, but Haruji Matsue, who had earned a Master's degree in sugar chemistry from Louisiana State University, turned the Marianas into sugar producing islands. The sugar production and other farming further contributed to Japanese economy. Okinawans moved to the Marianas to work in the sugar fields and farm, easing the population problems in Okinawa.

Also in 1922, the Washington conference on naval armament led to the Washington Naval Limitations Treaty which placed limits on warships and included a freeze on US insular fortifications west of Hawaii. This weakened the island defences in the Philippines and Guam and, on the latter, the coastal defence guns were removed soon after the Treaty and were not replaced before the Japanese assault on Guam in December 1941.

The Micronesian Islands were economically merged into the Japanese empire by 1934, the same year that Japan announced its intention to withdraw from the League of Nations two years hence. Also that year, military construction was started in the mandates. On Saipan, two major bases were built, an airfield and a naval base, the airfield being sited on the south tip of the island at Aslito. This was a naval airfield meeting air depot standards with two large hangars, workshops, and fuelling facilities. After the war, Japanese leaders claimed it was a civilian facility but the layout, plans, and functions were standard naval air depot drawings. Further refuting the post-war claims was the construction of military bomb-proof structures at the airfield and, of the 60 buildings, 11 were designed with one-metre thick walls of reinforced concrete. These buildings survived the American pre-invasion naval and air bombardment, and a number of them are offices and shops today.

Green Beach, Saipan: now a city park; then touch-down for the 2nd and 3rd Battalions, 8th Marines, 2nd Marine Division. (USNA)



The Marianas operation involved an amphibious assault some 1,200 miles from the nearest American base and from 4,000 to 7,000 miles from where the troops would depart. The four landing beaches, designated Red, Green, Blue and Yellow, backed the flatter south-western corner of the island but alternatives, Scarlet and Black, were earmarked on the north-western shore. Incomplete aerial photography of Saipan resulted in inaccuracies on the first map which was issued prior to the landing on June 15, 1944, something not alleviated until Japanese maps were captured.

The naval base was constructed at Flores Point, on Tanapag Harbor. This base had shops and facilities to support fleet movements in the central Pacific. Twenty-four buildings were erected and most were destroyed in the battle for the island in 1944.

Both Aslito Field and Flores Point were support facilities for air and naval operations to the south and east. They were not intended as island defences but support for offensive actions. To guard against raiding parties from Guam, limited beach defences were built during February-April, 1941, comprising blockhouses with four gun ports for 13mm machine guns or 20mm automatic cannons. They were sited at potential landing beaches, and were backed up by trenchworks, rifle pits, and machine gun positions.

On Red Beach, the 2nd and 3rd Battalions of the 6th Marines encountered stiff resistance and suffered heavy losses in both personnel and equipment. The marines had advanced no more than 75 to 100 yards when, just after 1000 hours, the Japanese carried out a charge down the beach from the north, striking the regimental command post, the 2nd Battalion, and the wounded on the beach. Coincidentally, a Japanese tank at the water's edge, previously considered abandoned, suddenly came to life and opened up a devastating fire on the 6th Marines reserve approaching in its LVTs. (USNA)

Japanese artillery flanked the beaches. This 120mm gun was emplaced to the north at Mutcho Point. (USNA)

By September 1943, the Imperial Headquarters had recognised that the Marianas were in danger. However, a more immediate crisis was in the Rabaul area and this drained away aircraft and troops. The Yokosuka 1st Special Naval Landing Force, some 1,500 strong, which arrived at Saipan in late 1943, was reduced by one-third in January as a detachment was dispatched to the Rabaul area.

The decision to reinforce the Marianas was not acted upon until the Marshall Islands fell in February 1944. This event, and the massive carrier aircraft raids at Truk (now Chuuk) in mid-February, and carrier raids in the Marianas on February 22-23, indicated that the Marianas could anticipate an invasion soon.

The Japanese response was to send Army reinforcements and to reorganise their Naval forces. On March 10, the Pacific Area Fleet, commanded by Vice-Admiral Chuichi Nagumo, who had led the attack on Pearl Harbor, was formed. This fleet was organised to give more local naval defence to the central Pacific, but it was so late in coming that it had not progressed beyond the paper stage when US marines landed at Saipan on June 15, 1944.

Not only was the central Pacific Area Fleet to command all Navy forces but also all Army forces in the mandates. This order was strongly opposed by the Army and a unified command was never realised with resulting disorganisation. In the spring of 1944, reinforcements finally began to arrive in large numbers, and by May there were two divisions (29th and 43rd), two independent brigades, and two independent regiments in the Marianas.

The 43rd Division sailed into Tanapag Harbor only a few weeks ahead of the American landings. One of its convoys had been hard hit by American submarines which had been very effective in attacking the Japanese build up, losing five of seven transports with considerable loss of life, critical equipment and materials, the 118th Regiment losing 850 men and most of its weapons.

The expansion effort on Saipan included improvements at Aslito and building two new airfields at Marpi and Charan Kanoa. The 43rd Division went to work to install coastal defence guns but a shortage of time and materials prevented completion. When the island was captured, a survey of coastal defences indicated that of 89 guns available, only 32 were ready and able to fire.

The rapid seizure of the Marshall Islands by American forces, and the neutralisation of Truk, allowed the date for the Marianas operations to be advanced. The final plan scheduled the invasion of Saipan for June 15 with Guam to follow three days later. Operation 'Forager' — the capture of the Marianas — was divided into two forces: one for the northern islands of Saipan and Tinian and the other for the southern Mariana island of Guam. They were designated the Northern and Southern Troops and Landing Forces. The NTLF contained over 66,000 ground troops with Lieutenant General Holland M. Smith, USMC, in command.

From shells . . . to surfboards. This former Japanese casemate in the grounds of the Hyatt Regency Hotel is now a rental shop .

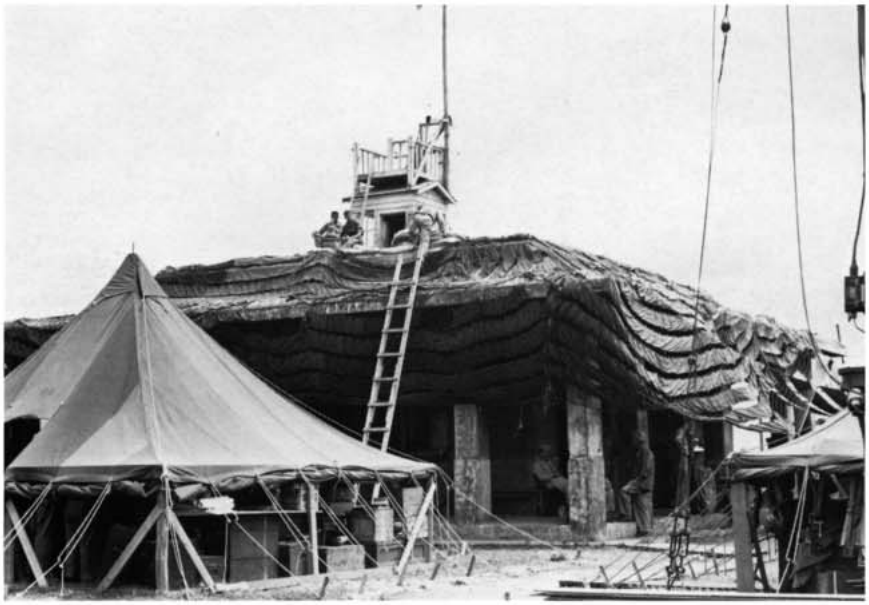
The joint Army-Marine operation was under the overall command of Lieutenant General Holland M. Smith *(left)* whose command post *(right)* still survives, although currently abandoned *(centre)*. The Saipan campaign was marked by the controversy of a Marine Corps general sacking an Army general, Major General Ralph C. Smith, for the poor performance of his 27th Infantry Division; an act which no doubt reinforced the Marine Corps general's nickname of 'Howlin Mad'. (A third General Smith — this time Major General Julian C. — was commanding the 2nd Marine Division but he had been superseded by Major General Thomas E. Watson on April 10.) (USNA)

General 'Howlin Mad' Smith had three divisions for the capture of Saipan. The assault forces were the 2nd and 4th Marine Divisions, with the Army's 27th Infantry Division in reserve. The 2nd Marine Division came ashore on Red and Green Beaches north of Afetna Point while the 4th hit the beaches to the south near Charan Kanoa.

In spite of heavy pre-invasion bombardment and carrier aircraft strikes, numerous gun positions were still intact and the 32,000 Japanese defenders bitterly resisted the landings. Once ashore, artillery in the hills, especially Hill 500, in the centre of the island, opened fire and caused heavy casualties. There were also beach strong points which survived the pre-invasion bombardment. The 25th Marines, 4th Division, were halted by a strong point at Agingan Point. They could not move until it was destroyed by an infantry-armour attack during the afternoon. By the end of the first day, marine advances were limited to one-half their objective.

The first night, the Japanese launched several counter-attacks which were repulsed. One of the central Pacific's largest Japanese co-ordinated tank-infantry attacks came as a counter-attack on the second night. At 0330 hours, the 9th Tank Regiment with about 40 tanks with 1,000 infantry rolled down the road towards the Susupe radio station, hitting the lines of the 1st Battalion, 6th Marines, overrunning the forward positions of Company B. The marines quickly reorganised and responded with grenades, bazooka and artillery fire, helped by the Navy which illuminated the battlefield with star shells. After a fierce battle, hundreds of Japanese dead and 31 tanks littered the battlefield.

Another abandoned building is this former Japanese hospital at Garapan — being checked here for snipers. (USNA)



The Japanese air operations centre at Aslito airfield soon after its capture by American forces. (USNA)

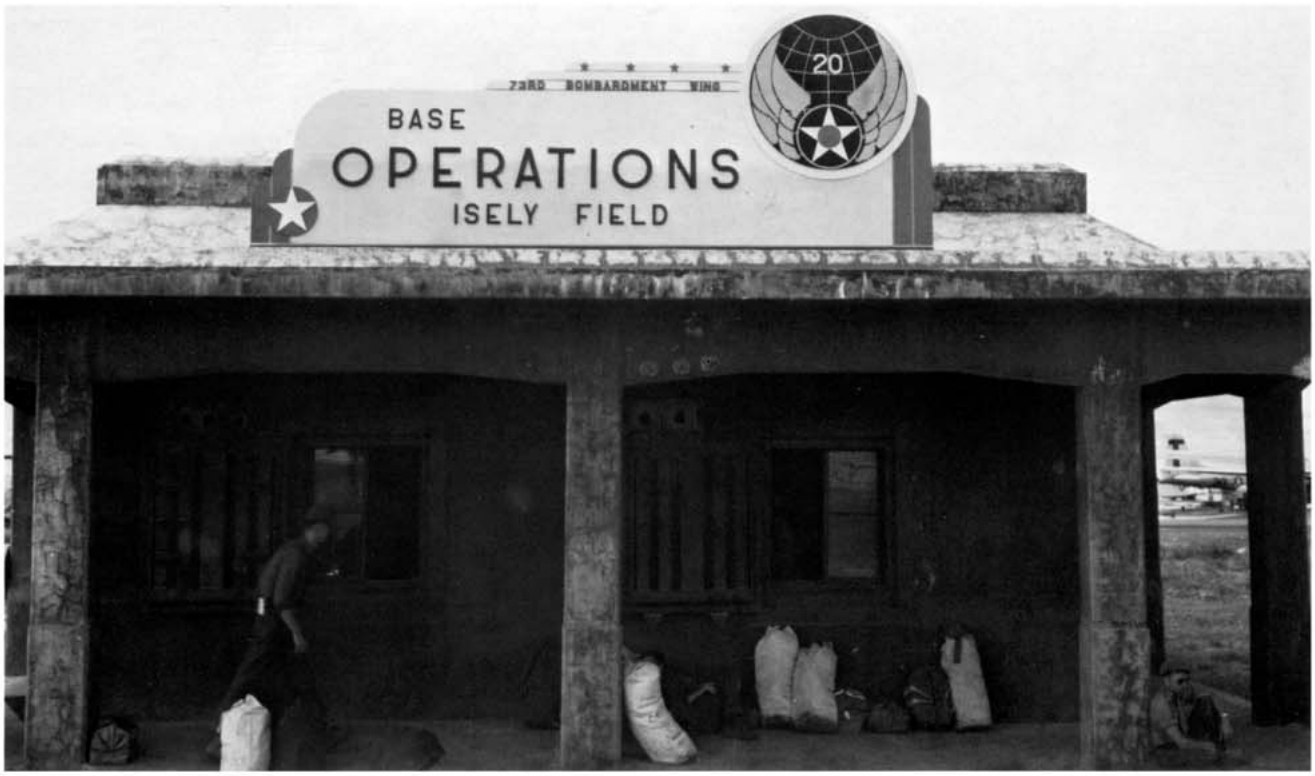
The first days of the Saipan campaign indicated that it would be tougher than anticipated and the reserve force for the entire Marianas, the 27th Infantry Division, had to be committed. Adding to American concern was the Japanese Mobile Fleet which had been spotted by American submarines on June 15 heading towards the Marianas. The Task Force commander, Vice Admiral Raymond Spruance, US Fifth Fleet, considering these two developments, postponed the landings on Guam and dispatched his transports to safer seas to the east. Once a new force was found for the Guam operation (the 77th Infantry Division), the landings were rescheduled for July 21.

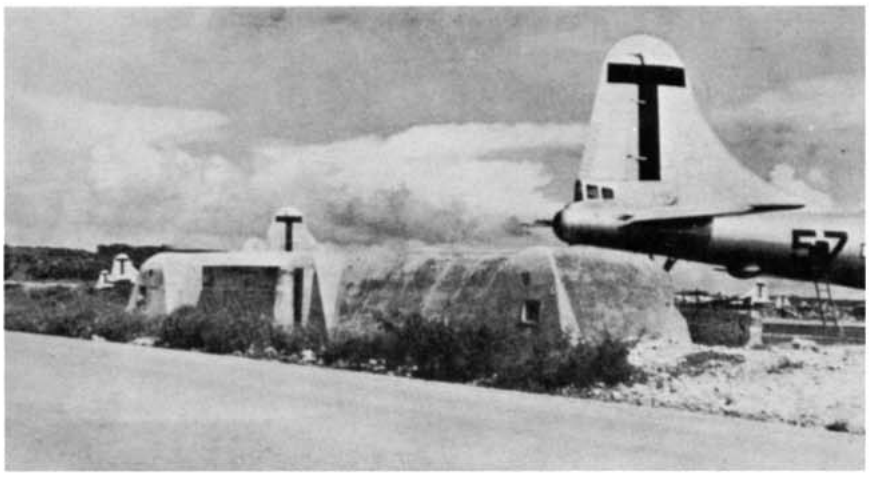
On June 18, all four US carrier groups were steaming to meet the Japanese Mobile Fleet, and the carrier battle took place the following day. By nightfall on the 19th, the 'Great Marianas Turkey Shoot' was over and the Japanese had lost 330 planes against 30 US losses. This huge destruction of Japanese air power doomed their defence of the Marianas.

By June 18, the 4th Marine Division had severed the southern portion of Saipan from the rest of the island while the 165th Infantry, 27th Division, captured Aslito airfield. The 165th then pushed to Magicienne Bay and had almost reached the ocean by the end of the day. Over the next two days, the 4th Division thrust east beyond Lake Susupe to Hill 500 to establish a line across Saipan. Everything south, except a pocket of resistance on Nafutan Point had been secured.

Below: **Today, the same building is used as the offices for Saipan's International Airport.**

Below: **It became the base operations building at what was renamed Isely Field after Navy Commander Robert H. Isely who was shot down and killed on June 13 while strafing the airfield. (Today's name 'Isley' is a subsequent mis-spelling which has never been corrected.)**





The first US aircraft to land at Aslito-Isley was a Grumman TBF-1 Avenger which touched down on June 20 with a wounded gunner aboard. Thereafter, the airfield was rapidly upgraded to handle B-29 Superforts. This air raid shelter still survives on the edge of the airport.

The Japanese defence on Nafutan Point, where the defenders were taking good advantage of the natural terrain, was causing problems for the 27th Infantry Division. The slowness of the 27th added to growing Marine disrespect for the fighting ability of this Army division, and General Smith's grave misgivings about its leadership. He saw a few Japanese on Nafutan Point holding out against a superior Army force, and later events on Saipan would, for General Smith, confirm in his mind that the 27th lacked fighting spirit.

On June 22, the marines reached the summit of Mount Tipo Pale and the next day seized the peak of Hill 600 in the drive north. That day, Aslito airfield became operational with fighters transferred to the field from carriers. The push north was on a line, with the 2nd Marine Division on the west side, the 27th Division in the centre, and the 4th Marine Division on the east with Japanese resistance being especially strong in the west and in the centre. The 27th Division and the 2nd Marine Division were not able to reach their objectives and the Army troops moved so slowly that General Smith relieved the 27th Division's commander, Major General Ralph Smith, on June 24. While the relief of commanders was not rare in the Pacific, the sacking of an Army general by a Marine general was another matter, and the debate over the sacking and fighting ability of the 27th grew and led to a wartime investigation and is still not resolved today.

Major General Sanderford Jarman, who was waiting to become island commander once Saipan was secured, was tagged to replace General Smith. However, the replacement had little impact on the advance of the 27th into the hostile terrain and battle positions of Death Valley where strong points had to be destroyed one by one. On June 28, Major General George Griner arrived as permanent commander of the 27th.

Army troops broke through Death Valley on June 30, at which point resistance diminished. As the 27th pushed north, Lieutenant-General Yoshitsugo Saito, the island commander, considered his final defence. He had two options: either to withdraw to the north and hold on as long as possible, or launch a final massive counter-attack. Deciding that the latter course was the best option, his counter-attack hit the lines of the 105th Regiment, 27th Division, during the night of July 6/7. About 3,000 Japanese overran the 105th with a large number of Japanese exploiting a gap between the 1st and 2nd Battalions of the 105th. From the gap, the attackers moved south to attack a Marine artillery position near Tanapag where the advance was finally halted. US reinforcements arrived, and by nightfall the pre-attack lines had been re-established. Some 2,500 Japanese dead were buried on the Tanapag coastal plain in mass graves.

With the defeat of the counter-attack the Japanese defence of Saipan was nearly exhausted, and many soldiers and civilians, including women and children, hurled themselves off the cliffs at Marpi in a mass suicide. On July 9, Saipan was declared secured although another 2,000 Japanese remained to be killed or captured during extensive searches and patrols.

All told, Japanese losses were about 18,000 killed with 1,800 being taken prisoner; the United States losing 3,143 killed and 13,500 wounded.

After a battle lasting three weeks, Saipan was all but secure although, as on so many of the Pacific islands held by the Japanese, elimination of the last diehards took many months and there were still enemy soldiers at large after the final defeat of Japan over a year later. Many hundreds of civilians on Saipan refused to surrender and embarked on a ghastly exhibition of self-destruction by flinging themselves and their children over the cliff at Marpi Point onto the jagged rocks below. A commander of a US patrol boat said that progress around the point at this time was slow and tedious because of the hundreds of corpses floating in the water. *Left:* **The cliff photographed some months after the end of World War II.** *Right:* **'Suicide Cliff' pictured by Glenn E. McClure — former USAAF Colonel in the Pacific and latterday Saipan historian.**

Above: **Quarry extraordinaire! Just how much of this pile of assorted armour survived the post-war scrap drive is not known but the Tanapag landfill site has disgorged a Japanese Type 97 like the one** *(below)* **from the Susupe area now on display in the American Memorial Park at Garapan.**

SAIPAN TODAY

Saipan remained quiet and undeveloped until the recent tourism developments which have now transformed the island with modern conveniences and new typhoon-proof homes. Now, it is a popular Japanese tourist destination where they enjoy the sunshine, white sandy beaches, and moderately priced golf courses. Their aircraft put down at Saipan International Airport — formerly the Japanese airfield of Aslito and latterly the US Isley Field.

Before tourism, the main economic pursuit was the recovery of scrap metal and during the 1950s, ships arrived to pick up guns, aircraft, tanks, and building materials from the Japanese and later American installations. Most of the war material disappeared but some, hidden away in the jungle, was missed. In recent years, trails and easier access to these relics has increased visits to them but some, like the 6-inch guns on Nafutan Point, their casemates only partially completed, are still extremely difficult to reach. Bomb-proof buildings at Saipan Airport, which were in the jungle just a few years ago, are presently only a short walk across mown grass.

Most of the Japanese tanks left Saipan as scrap or were buried in the Tanapag landfill (one Type 97 being pulled out and returned to Japan where it was restored). Two Type 97 tanks, recovered from the Susupe area, are displayed in the American Memorial Park, and there is also a Stuart tank on Kagman Peninsula. In the waters just off the invasion beaches are Shermans and amtracs.

Below left: **This 25mm Type 96 can also be seen in the park while the 140mm artillery piece** *(below right)* **has been removed from its original emplacement and set up in the Last Command Post Park at Marpi Point.**

The former Japanese lighthouse above Garapan was later used by the US Navy as a radio station, but more recently has found a new rôle as a restaurant.

The improved access to historic features has been part of the tourism program and those World War II relics which remain are now protected. Today, before new construction, sites are surveyed, World War II features are located and identified and, when possible, retained. For example, at Kagman Peninsula where a golf course was planned, an American M5A1 Stuart light tank was found in the jungle, still sitting where it was stopped by a Japanese anti-tank gun. The Historic Preservation Office worked with the developers who modified their plans so that the tank would stand in a rough off the course with a trail built to it.

Of the 89 coastal defence guns shipped to Saipan, only six still remain in situ and another five have been relocated to a visitors' park. On Managatha Island in Tanapag Harbor, two 140mm guns can be seen in their partially completed emplacements, the island being reached by tourist boats from Garapan. A third extant coastal defence gun, which was hit by naval gun-fire and was blasted off its pedestal, is a 120mm in a casemate on LaoLao Bay (Magicienne Bay). Behind the casemate are the ruins of an ammunition magazine and next to it is an open, but empty, position for a second 120mm gun. North-west of the gun casemate is a radar base, ruins of a fire control centre, and a barracks area. At the mid-point of LaoLao Bay is one of the beach defence blockhouses and to the rear of it are defensive trenchworks.

On Hill 500, overlooking the invasion beaches, is a 150mm Type 4 howitzer, one of the weapons which laid some of the most deadly fire onto the invasion beaches.

Five guns removed from various island locations have been moved to the Last Command Post park at Marpi Point. There are three 120mm Type 10 guns, one 140mm naval gun, and one 200mm anti-boat gun. A Type 95 tank found in the jungle has also been placed on exhibition. From the park, a trail leads to cave positions incorrectly identified as the 'last Japanese command post'.

A number of casemates without their guns have survived. On the grounds of the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Garapan a 120mm casemate is now a rental store for water skis. Casemates at Agingan Point are now within a garbage dump.

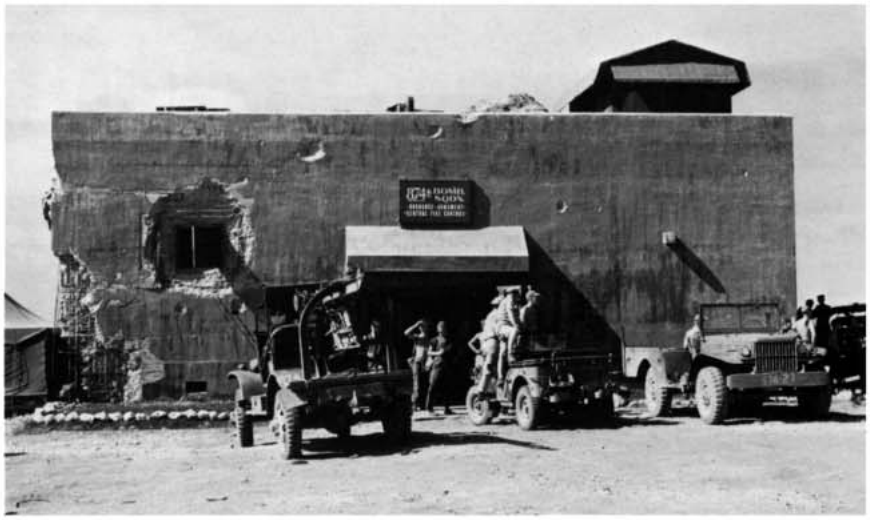
One of the more interesting relics is a Shinto shrine which was only lightly damaged near the Hyatt Regency Hotel. Inside the shrine, US servicemen wrote their names on the white walls which were still readable until a recent spate of vandalism.

The two Japanese towns of Garapan and Charan Kanoa were virtually destroyed in the pre-invasion bombardment. Odd houses of the sugar plant staff survive in the former, while in the latter the Japanese civilian hospital is intact. There are plans to convert this building into a museum.

On Navy Hill above Garapan is one of the Japanese lighthouses which served as observation and fire control facility. The US Navy restored it after the battle to function as a radio station, and it has been modified again in more recent years to become a restaurant. The goal of the June 16 counter-attack, the radio station at Susupe, is also still intact.

A few buildings are extant at the Flores Point naval base which is today an industrial park called Lower Base. Here, there are a fuel storage building and naval air raid shelters. Just to the north lies Tanapag, the site of the counter-attack of July 6/7, where one of the mass graves is currently being excavated and the remains returned to Japan.

The American Quonset huts which were put up all over the island when it became an important B-29 base are all gone, all that remains being debris and a few concrete bases. However, since the Japanese built more-permanent constructions, there are a number of Japanese military and civilian buildings left. At Aslito Field, there are fuel storage bunkers, a power plant, a semi-underground fuel bunker, an ammunition bunker, air raid shelters, and a dispensary building. The former air operations buildings are now the airport offices and the power plant is a Red Cross office and emergency centre. One of the fuel storage bunkers is now the Marianas Visitors Bureau tourist centre where a free map is available showing the various World War II sites and features. In the jungle on the north side of the airport, foundations can be seen of some of the old Japanese airfield barracks and workshop areas.



This old Japanese fuel storage bunker now has a new lease of life as the office of the Marianas Visitors Bureau.

LEE MARVIN: HELL IN THE PACIFIC

By Michael Munn

During his lifetime, Lee Marvin became known as a 'hellraiser' who often got drunk on the sets of his films, threw a few fists — 'always in self defense, or just because the other guy asked for it' — and personified, in a number of war films, the tough American soldier, most notably in films like *The Dirty Dozen* and *The Big Red One*. On screen, he usually played a leader of men, an officer; typifying the Hollywood war hero.

The real-life war hero was never an officer, never a leader, but a Private First Class who was insubordinate, as tough as old nails and the recipient of the Purple Heart. His experiences in the Pacific during World War II marked him deeply and, although he rarely spoke about that time, there always remained in him a deep-rooted sense of pride that he did not shirk his duty when Americans were being called to arms in the early months of 1942.

The marines accepted only the toughest young men. Few came tougher than Lee Marvin who was 18 when he enlisted. He had previously been sent by his father, Lamont Marvin, to St Leo, a Benedictine-run prep school which Lamont hoped would pull his wayward son into line. Said Lee Marvin to me when I was fortunate to interview him in 1980, 'I was a pain in the ass to my father and a pain in the ass to the monks. I was the scourge of St Leo. They lost patience with me and kicked me out. I was 18 and war had been declared, so I thought, what the hell, I'd give the marines what for.'

When he told his father he was going to enlist, Lamont replied, 'I think you've made the right decision, son.' Marvin told me, 'I think that meant he hoped the generals might do the job the monks failed to do'.

His decision to join the marines — and only the marines — was a strange one for someone who rebelled against discipline at every turn. But he had his reasons. 'I knew I was going to be killed and I just wanted to be killed in the best outfit. There are ordinary corpses, and there are Marine corpses. I figured on being a first class corpse!'

He enlisted 'and then waited, and waited. I figured maybe the generals had been tipped off by the monks and had changed their minds'. They hadn't. In August, he received his orders to report to the Marine base at Parris Island, South Carolina. There, he collected his rifle and uniform and began boot camp training.

They didn't come tougher than Lee Marvin but his screen persona was rooted in his days as a US marine. *Top:* **As an established star, in 1979 he featured in *The Big Red One*; 35 years earlier** *(above)* **he was pictured familiarising himself with a Japanese Nambu machine gun — most probably at Camp Pendleton, California, where he trained as a demolitions man with Company B, 20th Marine Engineer Battalion, 4th Marine Division. (Lee Marvin)**

It didn't take him long to get all the sergeants hating him. As they roared commands at him, he would just stare blankly ahead, his eyes betraying his insolence and contempt. 'They'd threaten to put me in the stockade, have me shot, and I'd look up and see a bird and say, "Isn't that a finch?" Then I'd watch as the sergeant's blood vessels nearly burst out of his neck. They just wanted to dehumanise you. One sergeant said to me, "Why don't you just shoot yourself?"

'So I replied, "Why don't you go screw yourself, Sergeant?"

'I thought for sure they'd put me in the stockade. One sergeant stood with his face an inch from mine, balling me out, and I looked dumb and said, "Could you speak up a little?" But that was all in the first few days, and I quickly learned the best way to survive that hell camp was to take the shit and button the lip.

'A couple of weeks in boot camp was as much as I, or the sergeants, wanted to take, and I was told to report to Camp Pendleton. I decided I'd just hitch a lift, and outside the camp there I saw my old man. I thought he'd come to give me a pat on the back and wish me luck, but he had a kit bag and said he had joined up too. He was going to help out the British on their anti-aircraft detachments. So we hitched a ride south together.

'I guess I felt really proud of him and he did of me. When we arrived, we shook hands and said not much, but I never felt closer to him than I did then. And then we went our separate ways.'

While the marines did their best to make Marvin into a model soldier — he was training as a demolitions man in Company B, 20th Marine Engineer Battalion — the war went on without him. Following the US Navy's victory at Midway, the Allies had begun the difficult task of recapturing the Pacific islands seized by the Japanese during the first six months of 1942. Guadalcanal was won back from the Japanese in February 1943, and in May the US 7th Infantry Division stormed ashore on Attu Island in the Aleutians (see *After the Battle* No. 62). Naval bombardment and bombing attacks failed to destroy the Japanese defences but the Americans fought on for 20 days and by the end of the month almost all of the Japanese had been killed or committed suicide. Kiska was abandoned by the Japanese and fell into American hands in August.

After five months with the battalion, Private Marvin had a squabble with his Executive Officer after he accused his sergeant of cheating at poker and he spent the next 40 days on mess duties. 'Those two really had it in for me' recalled Marvin in later years, 'but in retrospect I can't say that I blame them'. After training, he was assigned to Company D with the 4th Tank Battalion 'Scout-Snipers' and shipped to the Pacific. He was to take part in two landings: Kwajalein in the Marshall Islands in February 1944, and Saipan in the Marianas in June, for which he transferred to Company I, 3rd Battalion of the 24th Marines when this picture was taken. (Lee Marvin)

Lee Marvin's film career began in 1951 with a small part in the service comedy *You're in the Navy Now*. With his imposing stature and rugged looks, he became typecast throughout the 'fifties as a 'heavy', mainly in westerns and crime films, though during the 'sixties he was able to turn from villain to hero primarily via his starring role in the TV series *M-Squad*. He made a number of war pictures, and in 1956 appeared in Robert Aldrich's *Attack* *(above)*, set in Belgium during 1944, which also starred Jack Palance and Eddie Albert. As its theme was that of an American officer's pathological cowardice, and the corruption of his politically-minded superior (Marvin) in covering it up, the authorities declined to furnish the production with military co-operation. As a result, the picture depicted rampant German armour with a solitary M5 Stuart!

The year of 1967 saw him starring in another Aldrich film, *The Dirty Dozen*, which, though heavily criticised for its violence, nevertheless made a lot of money for MGM, becoming their sixth most successful film, and their top grossing war picture.

In June, the Allies launched Operation 'Cartwheel' with the intention of cutting Tokyo off from its south-east Asian empire. General Douglas MacArthur moved west through northern New Guinea while Admiral William Halsey 'hopped' his way up the Solomon Islands.

Since World War I, the Marshall Islands in the mid-Pacific had been Japanese territory (see *After the Battle* No. 85). Admiral Chester Nimitz, in charge of central Pacific operations, proposed taking Kwajalein atoll, bypassing virtually all the other islands in the chain.

In December 1943, the US fleet bombarded the islands. The Japanese, expecting the Americans to attack each island in turn, distributed its forces through the islands. But Nimitz surprised the Japanese by attacking only Kwajalein on February 1, 1944. Lee Marvin was 'in that particular shindig'.

He said, 'I was in a divisional reconnaissance company [Company D, 4th Tank Battalion] and we had to go in the night before the dawn assault and try to reconnoitre a route. We were put down by an assault personnel destroyer in rubber boats; there were around 12 guys in each boat and I guess 110 of us in all, and you can bet we lost half at sea.

'So we land and then wander around and not see a goddam thing because you didn't want to see a goddam thing. All you wanted to do was get the hell off that island. If you were fired on you were supposed to throw your poncho over your head, whip out a flashlight and draw an X on the map to show where the fire was coming from. I don't think anybody ever threw a poncho over their head, and nobody fired back either because you knew that if you fired back, then the Japs would know your position and then you'd be dead. Right?

'So we all got lost and then we'd wait for the sun to come up — *if* you were still alive — and then you saw the whole United States Navy out there and if they thought you were the Japs they'd start shelling you. You end up getting fired on by the Americans and the Japs and you know if you stay on the island you won't stand a chance, so you swim out to a reef and pray and hope that God is listening. Forget all that bravery crap; you're shit scared'.

After four days of ferocious fighting, the Japanese on Kwajalein capitulated. The battle to take the Marshall Islands ended in success for the Americans on February 22 with the capture and occupation of Eniwetok.

On June 11, 1944, the Americans bombed the airfields of Saipan, Tinian and Guam in the Marianas. US battleships joined the bombardment on the 15th, and 20,000 American troops were deposited on Saipan's shores. Among them was Pfc Lee Marvin who once more slipped into a rubber boat, wondering if this time he'd get his 'meal ticket'. This is his story in his own words as he told it to me, less the frequently interjected f-word!

'We [Company I, 3rd Battalion, 24th Marines] landed on Yellow Beach, south of a place called Charan Kanoa, on the morning of the first day. We crawled forward on our bellies and made it to the beach scrub. Beyond were open fields and in the fields were planted thousands of sticks with saki bottles on them. I assumed they were used as insulators for wires that had been knocked out. I was wrong. The Japs were using them as artillery markers. They knew exactly how to checkmate us in that field. They couldn't miss as we crawled into these fields, and the artillery pounding hell out of us. We finally got to a large trench some 1,800 yards from the shore. We just dived in as the Jap artillery threw every damn thing they had at us.

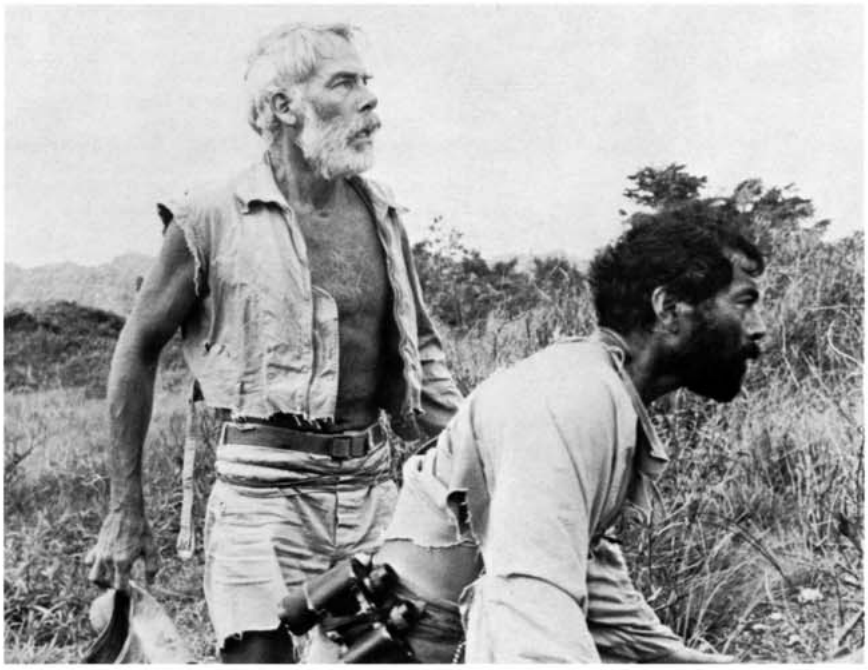
'So there we were in this trench with the world exploding around us and thanking God we'd found these trenches to give us cover. Then I saw that the parapets of a trench ahead of us had slits in them and I realised they belonged to the Japs, and I was just saying "Hey, you guys, I think this is a Jap trench" when they opened up on us. We cleared outa there — the whole trench was emptied and it had to be 3,000 yards long.

'Then it was night. There were about 30 yards between them and us. We fought through the night and we lost quite a few men. The sun came up and we were ordered to take Aslito airfield, so that's the direction we went in, going through those cane fields with the artillery blowing us up. We lost some more of our guys and they pulled us out. End of third day.

'Fourth day dawns. We went into what they later called Death Valley and you could tell it was. We were going up this mountain called Tapotchau. Well, I thought, if I lived long enough I might get to the top of it. It didn't look that hard. Of course they had Japs up there, so nobody could get up far enough. They sent one company in and lost a lot of men. The survivors were called back, and they sent us in. It was night then.

'I was the point man of the company so I went up there with a guy called Mike Harrison. We went one way, the second and third platoons went another way, and God knows which way the fourth went.

Not surprisingly, it generated a number of imitators, such as *The Devil's Brigade* and *Play Dirty*, and it also spawned its own TV movie sequels: Marvin was coerced into making *The Dirty Dozen — Next Mission* in 1984, along with fellow 'veterans' from the original, Ernest Borgnine and Richard Jaeckel. After his death in 1987, Marvin's role was taken over by yet another 'veteran', Telly Savalas, in *The Dirty Dozen — The Deadly Mission*, and *The Dirty Dozen — The Fatal Mission*.



Two years after *The Dirty Dozen*, Marvin appeared in *Hell in the Pacific*, a two-hander which he shared with Japanese star Toshiro Mifune, better remembered for his role in *The Seven Samurai*. Photographed in the Palau Islands (see *After the Battle* No. 76 and 78), the picture told the story of an American pilot and a Japanese naval officer both stranded on an isolated atoll, and their setting aside of current enmities in order to concentrate upon personal survival.

'We were climbing and suddenly Mike got it through the chest. I thought he'd got it in the lung because the blood was pink. I didn't know what the hell to do so I just stuck my finger in the hole in his chest to try to stop the blood coming out. I didn't know what I was doing. You just do things because you're desperate and I was desperate for Mike not to die. I was mad as hell then. I lifted my Browning automatic and just started firing at whatever was coming my way, using just one hand because the other had a finger stuck in Mike's lung. We had machine gun fire coming at us at point-blank range. Anyway, Mike was dead and I just kept on firing. We were all firing like crazy for about 15 minutes but I don't know if we actually hit any of 'em.

'Then the captain shouted for us to fall in. We'd had about 250 men. Now there were only six of us. I couldn't get to the rest of them, and I don't know if anyone else could because we were in this ambush and we were being decimated.

'Suddenly, there was this Jap almost on top of me. I couldn't see him in the dark. I was just flat on the ground. The first shot he got off at me hit the rubber heel of my left shoe. It made my leg kinda fling out and I just didn't know then if I'd been hit there. I was on my belly, and I turned my head to look up and there was a bang. He'd missed my face but he hit the ground so close that all the stuff that got thrown up by the bullet hit my eyes. I cried, "Oh Jesus!" Then he shot me in the ass, although I didn't know then exactly where I was hit, only that I was hit.

'"Jesus Christ, I'm hit."

'"Shut up, we're all hit."

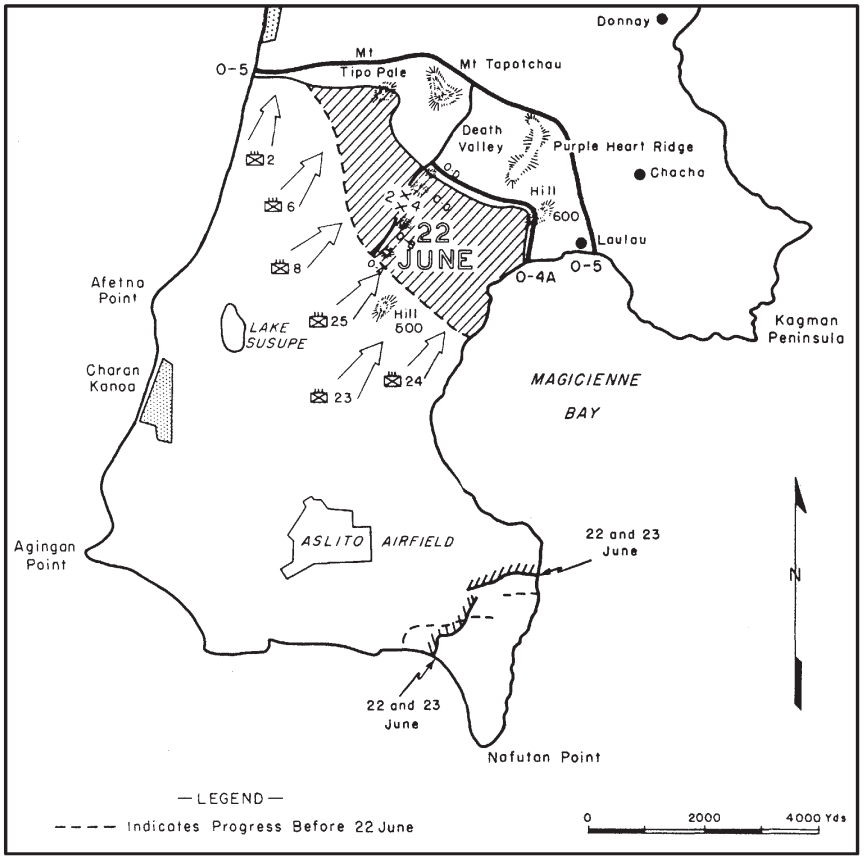
'I yelled, "But I'm hit, don't you understand?"

'Then it got really confusing, if it hadn't been bad enough. The ammunition dumps were being blown up, we were counter-attacking, they were counter-attacking.

Two guys came and got me; Pettigrew and Shyte — what a name, Shyte! You don't know what kind of state you're in, you know. You don't know if you can move, you don't know where you've been shot. You're just stunned from the neck down. You could be shot through the heart for all you know, except then you'd be dead, but I was still alive. You go through the motions; can you wiggle your toes? Yeah, I can wiggle my toes. Then you try and move your feet, and I'm doing all this when Shyte screams, "Hey, Captain, Marvel's hit in the ass" — that's what they called me, Captain Marvel. So they got Captain Marvel outa there and down that goddam mountain.

'The next day, they found 27 gun emplacements surrounding our position. It's a wonder any of us lived. The bullets were still flying. The MO dumped some salt on my ass and a bandage, and he said, "Lift your ass so I can tie the bandage." And I said, "With all that shit flying around, I'm not lifting my ass a sixteenth of an inch higher than I need to." There was no getting carried outa there on a stretcher. You wouldn't have lasted five seconds. So I had to crawl out, passing all these guys I'd known lying dead.

'I had a couple of medics with me and we got to a clearing which was about 20 feet across, and you knew if you stepped out there you'd get gunned down. I was never going to crawl across anyway because I couldn't use my legs, and the only way to get across that clearing was to go like hell. So I told the medics, "If you can get me up on my legs and give me a shove, I might make it." So they managed to get me on my feet and they gave me an almighty push and I sort of half ran the first 15 yards and fell the last five, sliding into a scrub. I crawled behind the biggest tree I could find and found a guy who I knew. His name was Rose. He just sat there like there was nothing else happening and he said, "Where're you hit?"



Marvin's recollection of his war on Saipan is rather imprecise as to timing but it would appear that he was wounded during the advance from objective line O-4A to O-5. The 24th Marines under Colonel Franklin A. Hart were to attack along the coast of Magicienne Bay with the 1st and 3rd (Marvin's) Battalions abreast the 25th Marines on their left. The advance began at 0600 hours on June 22 — seven days after the initial landing. The 24th reached O-4A at 1330. The following day, the Army's 106th Infantry Regiment (27th Division) were brought up to exploit the situation and advance through Death Valley to O-5 but by the end of the day, the 106th front remained on its original line of departure — a poor performance which was to lead to the division commander being relieved (see page 43).

***The Big Red One,* released in 1979, was an account of the US 1st Infantry Division during WWII as related through the collective experience of five soldiers. And by focusing upon such a small group, the film was thus able to depict the huge events in which these characters were embroiled at minimal cost. Particularly disappointing was a poor interpretation of 'Bloody Omaha', nominally punctuated with a few wooden beach obstacles, photographed on a sun-kissed beach in Israel.**

'I said, "In the ass."

'He said, "Would you like some water?"

'I said, "Jesus, yes."

'He leaned over to get his canteen, gave it to me, I took a gulp, gave it back to him, he went to put it back and just then he got hit. He just went "Oh!" and fell on top of me. I tried to get him off, but couldn't. He was dead but he just kept looking at me. By now I'm panicking.

'They were bringing other guys out who'd been wounded. There was a guy called Calello. He got hit in the back of the skull. It was just a glancing blow but it made him blind. He was screaming and someone was hollering for stretcher bearers. Finally, a couple of bearers got to him and, while they were putting him on the stretcher, one of them was killed by a shot. Then the other got it in the back. Calello got it in the hip, and then he got hit again and again even while a couple of other guys were trying to get him on a stretcher. He was screaming kind of hysterically; he didn't know if he was alive or dead.

'One guy came running by me and stepped right on my ass. I found out later I had this big hole just gaping open. They finally got me on a stretcher and I was thinking that machine gun fire is about stretcher height, so I said, "Do you have to put me on that?" But they carried me out, four of 'em, running real fast.

'One of them said, "Please, please," because it was too fast for him. He suddenly went down and I was all over the ground. They gathered me up again and off we went until they'd got me over a small ridge, just six feet high, and we had some cover at last. And when we get there, there's this whole battalion sitting back and smoking like nothing's happening.

'One of the bearers said, "Captain Marvel's been hit in the ass", so they took me back to battalion aid where the doc stood with a couple of Jap pistols in his belt and no shirt on.

'He said, "Do you need any blood?"

'I said, "How the hell would I know? You're the doc."

'"Okay, put him over there."

'There were two kinds of men over there. There were dead men over there, and there were the salvables over here who were sitting round smoking cigarettes but you just knew they were going to die.

'They put me right behind a stack of mortar shells. We had dumps of this stuff all over the place and every now and then you heard one get hit and going up. I was just waiting for a Jap mortar to hit my stack of shells.

'One of our sergeants was in there. He was still walking and they'd given him morphine, and when you're given morphine, they mark you with an "M", so he was walking around with an "M" on his head.

'He said to me, "You want some water?" He had it in a plasma can.

'I said, "Love some, sergeant." I took a mouthful and suddenly WOOOOOM! About 150 yards away one of the Japanese dumps we'd captured had been hit. I looked up and I saw marines flying through the air — slowly, you know — it was like slow motion.

'Then some one was shouting, "Counter-attack! Counter-attack!"

'I had no gun and I was really shit scared. They got everybody out of there and back on to the beach. I was one of the last four to go. They put two of us in a Jeep with the two medics, one with a pistol, and we took off. We were really flying, except it turned out we were heading the wrong way. We were heading right into Jap territory, and there they were right ahead of us.

'One of the guys just screamed and the driver stopped. The guy who screamed jumped out and the driver said, "Get back in or I'll shoot you". The guy got back in and we turned about and we flew back the way we came, and made it to the beach. It was about five in the afternoon by then.

'I was put in a tent, and a tent on the beach is the worst place to be because that's where they're unloading all the supplies and the Jap artillery is hammering the beach. I'm asking, "Can I get off this goddam island?"

'A guy who's writing the tags says, "Not tonight."

'But then he sees a landing craft going by and he hollers, "Anyone going out?" Then they ran me out to the craft and put me on board.

'I'm pumped up with morphine, the bleeding has pretty well stopped, and I'm face down on a stretcher and I'm really beginning to lose reality now. I can remember passing ships while we're looking for the nearest hospital ship. We pulled up alongside the *Solace* and the next thing I know I can see shiny black shoes in front of my face and I'm being lifted up and I'm put in a place with yellow walls and bright lights. The doctor or somebody is saying, "Where are you hit?"

'"In my ass."

'They got me to the urinary or some ward and put me down on a real bed. With a real mattress. And I'm saying, "But it's got sheets on it . . . the blood from my ass . . . "

'"That's okay." And there I was on a real bed.

'A guy comes along and says, "You want an ice cream?" I've got a nine-inch hole in my ass, I'm spaced out on morphine and from somewhere I swear I could hear *Moonlight Serenade* on a piano. But I can still hear firing, and I don't know where the hell I am now.

'I said, "Can you turn the lights out?"

'This guy said, "It's okay. You're okay now."

'Now I begin to recognise some of the guys around me. They even dimmed the lights but you could still hear the gun-fire and explosions on the beaches.

'It all began to hit me. I started to cry. I felt like a coward. I felt like a deserter. I was ashamed. I wept because I'd run away.

Although depicting an Army division serving in Europe — which landed in North Africa, Sicily, and on Omaha in Normandy — nevertheless the film gives us suitable images to portray Marvin during his war service in the Pacific.

During his last three years, Lee Marvin lived with his wife, Pamela, on his ranch at Tucson, Arizona. In December 1986, he was admitted to the Tucson Medical Center and had to return the following August after a severe bout of flu. Two weeks later, he suffered a heart attack and died at noon on August 29 with Pamela at his side. As a former serviceman, he was entitled to the honour of a full military funeral (like that shown *left*) and, although his remains had been cremated, his ashes were interred at Arlington National Cemetery, Washington, DC, on October 7, 1987 *(right)*. (O. L. Barr)

It really bugged me. I felt as if I'd as good as thrown down my rifle and run away. Left them to it. Of course, that wasn't the way it was at all, but all that morphine and *Moonlight Serenade* just made me feel that's the way it was, and I just cried and cried. Finally I fell asleep.'

Marvin was taken to a hospital on Guadalcanal and began treatment for a severed sciatic nerve. Then they gave him the Purple Heart. Later he would always say, 'It's nothing to shout about. I was in this hospital ward and some guy came round and said, "What's your name?" "Marvin?" He threw it across the bed and that was it. Everyone who didn't turn and run was given one.'

It turned out he had been a millimetre away from being permanently paralysed and he spent the next 13 months in different hospitals before being discharged. The battle to win the Marianas went on without him. The battle for Saipan was won by the Americans on July 9. Then they moved on to invade Guam on the 21st and it was in American hands by August 10.

After the war, Marvin took a number of odd jobs and decided he'd study at the American Theatre Wing under the GI Bill of Rights. After some work on the New York stage, he made his film debut in *You're in the Navy Now* in 1951 — 18th down the cast list. He worked steadily as a screen 'heavy' and, in 1966, won an Oscar for his performance in the comedy western *Cat Ballou*. Then, in 1967, he became a star as the leader of *The Dirty Dozen* which established his screen persona once and for all.

In 1969, he returned to the Pacific for the first time since the war, to the islands of Palau (see *After the Battle* No. 78), to film *Hell in the Pacific*, in which he and Toshiro Mifune portrayed an American pilot and a Japanese officer thrown together on a single island in the middle of the war. He took the opportunity to visit Saipan where debris from the war still lay on the beaches.

He said, 'I saw things that brought all the memories flooding back. A tank lying upended, a propeller from a Japanese Zero, and there were bones and skulls; and as I stood there I thought, *Shit! I can still hear the bastards!* I can remember every shit-scared second of it, exploding in my mind like a shell from a tank. I feel guilty because I ran away, and I feel proud just for being in it. But I tell you this, after it was over I missed — not the war — the camaraderie. When you sit around with those guys and you get shot with those guys . . . it's an emotional thing, and I miss them goddam marines.'

Lee Marvin died in 1987, aged 63.

'Take me on my own terms or go to Hell' was his personal motto. Marvin at his meanest as the sergeant in *The Big Red One*.

Michael Munn's latest book, 'Stars at War', was published on July 27, 1995 by Robson Books, 5-6 Clipstone Street, London W1P 7EB, price £17.95.